

The Monster

by kasviel

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Summary: From Silent Hill: Downpour. Pendleton/Sewell. When repentance can't be found or desired, monsters are born. The town waits to claim those certain souls, and bring them full circle. A look at Pendleton post-Silent Hill, and an exploration of George Sewell's history and mindset.

1. Chapter 1

****Author's Notes****

I was recently playing and watching my favorite horror series, Silent Hill. Reliving "Downpour", I decided it wasn't so bad: the idea of a "Green Mile" type of scenario in Silent Hill was appealing, and of the western-developed SH games, it was the strongest one, in my opinion. The idea of Pendleton/Sewell had crossed my mind before, but it was never a story I got around to writing. Maybe it's the dark mood being so sick this spring has put me in, but I decided to go for it.

"Villainsplaining" should be a genre of fan fiction, shouldn't it? It's being done in the mainstream media these days, with shows and movies depicting how a villain got to be the way they are ("Once Upon A Time" does it very well, and there is "Maleficent" and the upcoming "Suicide Squad"). But when a villain doesn't get their own story line officially, well, that's a good place for a fan fiction writer to come in, isn't it?

SH: Downpour had "Anne's Story", and this, I suppose, would be "Sewell's Story". It continues from after the events of Downpour, the canon "Truth and Justice" ending where Anne is seen to confront Sewell with a gun behind her back (presumably shooting and killing him for his murdering her father, Frank Coleridge). I have changed some things from the game, however. Murphy Pendleton, in this story, did indeed kill Patrick Napier, the man who murdered his son, he did not leave the job unfinished as Sewell inexplicably said in the

ending (the creator stated, according to the Silent Hill Wiki, that that dialogue was a "mistake", and "Anne's Story" confirmed Pendleton did it himself; I always believed personally Pendleton did end Napier). Murphy has his own story, which I may go into later, and he has become much darker by the time this story takes place. His journey through Silent Hill did not free him in this story, as the canon suggests, or perhaps Pendleton was never meant to be free at all. In any case, he is well on his way to becoming "The Bogeyman", and he knows it. A part of him, perhaps, even wants or needs it. This story is predominantly from George Sewell's point of view, which is why I'm explaining a little bit about Murphy here.

As for Sewell, I decided that he would be the ideal person to end up in Silent Hill. But not just the nightmare town. Thinking of DJ Ricks and Blackwood, I started wondering about the people who actually live in the town of Silent Hill. There is plenty of evidence that the town is occupied when it's not going through its various nightmare events, or perhaps those events take place in a dimension where the residents can't see them. Kaufmann, in the first game, claimed everyone in the town had "disappeared", Laura of Silent Hill 2 seemed to be walking through a normal town, and James and Mary had gone to the town and had such a good time that she remembered it always as her "special place", hence proving there is a version of the town that is at least semi-normal. James' good ending and the fact that he vanished in the town even makes me wonder if there is a "higher" dimension in the town, a version of the town that more resembles heaven than hell, where some people might actually might make it into. But I digress. Even if there was an idyllic version of the town, George Sewell is definitely not going to end up there.

Please read this WARNING: This story spoils the events of Silent Hill: Downpour. It also contains strong language, themes of child abuse, violence, and non-consensual sex acts. This is a dark one, so if you're easily offended, please avoid it.

* * *

><p>1

The man came to in a six-by-eight-foot cell with a ringing headache. He groaned and sat up, clutching his head in his hands. The ringing was literal—there was a sharp tone in his ears, like the aftermath of having one's eardrums blown out at a loud concert. He felt nothing, could not open his eyes to see, and the noise was all-encompassing, his entire world. He gritted his teeth against it, stubbornly trying to get a whisper of some other sound to focus on, a foothold on his audible reality.

Then, it was gone. The headache still mildly fuzzed his head, but the tone had abruptly ended. Music drifted into his hearing now, softly, a little scratchy with radio interference:

Born free

As free as the wind blows

As free as the grass grows

Born free to follow your heart

The man smiled. Yeah, that was more like it, a classic, not like all that gibbering thug crap you heard so often out here. As he listened to the song, he released his head, and dared to open his eyes. For a moment, he worried about his eyesight. Then, he realized it was just dark. He shut his eyes and opened them slowly, letting them acclimate to the lack of light.

He was on a cot in a prison cell. For a moment, he felt a disturbing sensation of displacement. The cell was unrecognizable from the clean sterile ones he spent his days around. The three plaster walls were dirty, stained with unnameable marks, peeling plaster, and even small holes. The concrete floor was broken in the corner, where some of the ceiling had caved in and was piled up in rubble. Water dripped from the sink's faucet, and there was a stench more fungal than human wafting up from the toilet. The man didn't recognize the decrepit cell, or the slim view of the hallway that he glimpsed between the bars. Where the hell was he?

Live free

And beauty surrounds you

The world still astounds you

each time you look at a star

The man shook the weird fear from his head, because it was ridiculous. He knew every inch of this place, why should he feel hopelessly lost? He was groggy, he figured. The explanation didn't fit, though. He knew that the only men who got shitfaced in prison were either drunk assholes or drunk idiots, and he was neither. He told himself he must have come down to the old cells underneath the prison, where he sometimes went to conduct certain business transactions, and had a beer or two too many. Stupid.

Get it together, George, the man thought to himself. He swung his legs off the cot and got to his feet. He must have stood too quickly, because the room whirled before his eyes. He stumbled, blinked, and rubbed his face with a hand roughly. He went to the faucet and ran the water until the rust cleared. He splashed his face with cold water and held it in both hands a minute, letting the unreality of dreams and booze fade. _Stupid. What if someone found you down here?_

George Sewell lifted his head from the sink and met his reflection in the mirror over the sink. He didn't look very much worse for the wear, despite his suspected hangover: his dark brown eyes, almost black, were bright, his face had its usual sharp, cunning tightness, and his prison guard uniform was only minimally rumpled. He ran some water through his black hair, pushing it back off his face, and straightened his shirt. He reached into his pockets, then his back pockets, but he could not find his black leather gloves, keys, or his baton. _Must have put them down somewhere,_ he thought, though a flutter of that inexplicable anxiety returned. He never usually parted from his trustworthy gloves (never knew when fingerprints might become inconvenient things to leave behind) or his weapon. What the hell had he been thinking?

George scowled at his reflection and turned from the mirror in disgust. Drinking on the job to the point of blacking out! Stupid!

What was wrong with him? He knew better. He knew better. He came down to these cells sometimes to think, do business, or grab a little shuteye, sure, but never to get drunk. He only came down because he liked the prison, it was a place he understood, and he knew it better than any of the other schmucks locked up or working here. He was probably the only one in the place that knew about these old cells, built way back when the prison was first constructed. But then, he always had liked history, he got that from his motherâ€”only good thing the bitch had left him.

George rubbed his temple. His thoughts were still random, disconnected, and where was this nostalgia coming from? If there was anything he hated more than criminals, it was sentimental people. He had to get out of this cell, there was probably something in the mold affecting his brain or something. He gripped a bar on the cell door in one hand, grimacing at the flakes of rust scraping his palm, and pulled it. The grating sound reminded him of that tone in his ears, and he gritted his teeth again. He pulled harder on the door, and was surprised when it did not open. Had it swung shut on its own, and that ancient lock had managed to fasten itself one last time? The old Ryall State Prison was still full of surprises, George mused, chuckling to himself. Keys, where were his keys? He was sure he could work the lock open with the old keys he kept for good luck, or the lock picks he kept on his keyring for special occasions.

He once again checked all of his pockets. He searched the cot (had he really slept on such a filthy mattress by choice?) and beneath where it was bolted to the wall. He checked the sink and the dirty floor. He even looked down into the toilet's black dirty water, though he drew the line at sticking a hand down in there. The search turned up no keys, no gloves, and no baton. The anxiety returned, and deepened into dread. What the fuck was this? Was someone playing a sick joke on him? Probably that stupid new guy with the overbite, Hicks or Hickey or whatever; he hadn't been around long enough to find out how George felt about practical jokers.

George entertained dark fantasies about what he would do to the moron responsible once he got out of here. He went over the cell inch by inch, but the search turned up nothing, not even his regulation flashlight. He was tactically naked, and he did not like that idea one bit. He began to suspect that this was more than a joke, and focused his search on finding a weapon. There was nothing readily available. He reached into the holes in the walls, but there were no pipes to tear out. Irritated, he decided to continue the search outside the cell. He turned to the cell door and kicked it. It shuddered and rained flakes of rust down on him, but miraculously held. He kicked it again, and again, but it refused to break open.

For an uncounted amount of time, George battered at that rusty cell door like a bull after a waving cape. He kicked and kicked. He shouldered the door until his arm hurt. He swore bitterly. He turned on the door and paced, running his hands through his hair, muttering to himself, damning everyone and everything. He went back to the door. The rusted metal was tougher than it seemed, and the lock was impossible. A classic. George laughed mirthlessly.

Defeated, the man sat on the edge of the cot. His fingers curled in his hair, gripping it behind his head tightly, his face bent over his knees. Thoughts raced through his mind rampantly. He swallowed hard

and fought the extraneous ones down. It did not matter how he had gotten here: if he had done it himself, it was a dumb mistake never to be repeated; if someone else had done it, they'd pay. Simple. He needed his energy to combat the not-so-simple problems: getting out, and, most importantly, getting a weapon.

George got up and headed to the sink and toilet. He wondered at criminals, how low a person you had to be to just take it for granted your crime was worth shitting in public for the foreseeable future. Animals, George figured, they were more like animals than people. Fuck them. He hoped it was that idiot guard that had done this, because if it was a prisoner, he might just have to wipe out a whole lot of them, and that would require some effort in covering up.

George put a fist through the wall below the sink. He tore away the stained dry wall until he laid hands on some of the piping. It was thin but it was metal, and if he was lucky ... Yeah, there it was. He broke off a segment of pipe, and the rusty brittleness gave the end a sharp edge. He held it in his hand, considering it. One scrape with that thing, and he'd have more problems than he already did. Not to mention, if this was someone's plot, they'd most likely be armed with more than a pipe, and he would need all his luck, wits, and the element of surprise. Reluctantly, he stashed the pipe under the cot's mattress. Even with it out of sight, George felt better knowing it was within reach. In prison, unarmed men were bitches for the taking.

George kicked the door again a few times, but it was hopeless. He sat down on the cot, blowing out a long sigh and waiting. He was good at waiting, had done it many long nights when a bus was late, or a covert transfer was being pulled off in darkness. Earlier, he had waited long nights ... waiting for pain, waiting for who knew what? Just waiting

The man shut his emotional brain off. Memories again, what the hell? And what had happened to the music, anyway?

The radio had been disrupted by static, but now music filtered in again. Same song, somehow. George didn't care, he liked it. It made him feel terrific to hear that song about freedom blasting in the ears of the idiots that had thrown their freedom away. The irony of hearing it now that he was behind bars was not lost on him, but he knew this was only temporary. He didn't belong in a cell, after all. He was better than that. He had always been better than that, and some things never changed. That was the only good thing about the world: some things never changed.

* * *

><p>"You think this is funny, huh? Yeah, real funny! Ha, ha! Fucking hilarious!"<p>

There was a rattle as the man hit the bars.

"Hilarious! Ha! You better hope you got the balls to leave me in here until I die, you asshole! You better pray I never get out of here! Because if I do" "Oh ho, God help me, if I do!"

George launched into very anatomically detailed and foul-mouthed

descriptions of what he would do with the person that was responsible for this personal outrage. The rage was so blindingly hot that it seared away his fear. It was a kind of succor, that all-consuming hatred, and the man gorged himself on it. Anything not to let the dread sink its claws into him, as he knew it was waiting to do.

_How long has it been? _George wondered. He had been pacing again, and now he threw himself down on the moldy cot. Worry shot through the coolness he had been keeping on his face, making its contours shift from rage to weariness. _How long? I'm not hungry, I don't need to use the 'facilities', such as they are, thank god. Can't be that long, right? Has anyone missed me yet? They would have calledâ€”_

George looked to his belt, but of course his radio was gone. Why hadn't he noticed its absence earlier? Well, he rarely used the damned thing. He handled the prisoners well enough on his own, and didn't use the thing for stupid chitchat like some guards did, as if they were adolescent girls. Still, he should have thought of it earlier. The situation was bad enough, but now he worried that his mind might have something seriously wrong with it. He went to the mirror and checked his forehead for cuts or abrasions. He ran his fingers over his skull carefully, ruffling his hair, but there was not even a bruise. What the fuck, then? Drugs? He didn't touch that shit. Had someone drugged him? This was turning out to be a bigger deal than he'd thought. Had someone planned this? Who? All his enemies were dead, he'd seen to that. Well, excepting that one that escaped, but there was no way he had gotten into Ryall State Prison.

Staring at his shoes like some weakass kid, George realized that the music had gone silent. The radio had crackled on and off during his time there, mostly repeating his favorite song, "Born Free", or pleasant rock instrumental tracks that sounded vaguely familiar. Now, it had completely died. He waited for it to come back to life, but there was only silence.

Then, the footsteps.

George did not look up, he only listened. The footsteps were heavy, definitely boots, as any East Coaster knew from years of brutal winters. The person walked slowly, methodically, and they stopped right in front of his cell. Without a doubt, this was the asshole that had incarcerated him. He thought of the pipe beneath the cot mattress, and calmed himself. The waiting had been torture, but this? He could handle confrontation. In fact, he was dying to do some confronting by now.

"Okay, hey? Hey! You got me!" he called out, getting to his feet. Let them think he was harmless, willing to go with a joke. If they didn't know him, they'd be put at ease. If they did, they'd think he was giddy from whatever shit they gave him or had snapped. "Real funny, boys, _real _funny."

The man stopped in front of his cell door. He stood before the bars, framed in red rust and decay. It was a man roughly George's height, wearing a long black coat, with a gas mask covering his face. _A psycho and a joker_, George thought in annoyance, _wonderful_. He was not looking forward to confronting this piece of shit, but he was glad it was just a man, just some stupid man with an ax to grind. He

could handle men. He had been handling dangerous men his entire life. In fact, the idea of taking down someone that had bested him, even in this small way, was a little exciting. It had been a long time since he'd had a challenge.

"You got me, all right?" George forced a laugh. "Ha! All right. I get it. I'm the old dog around here, right? What? Are you new? Did they make you do this as some kind of initiation? I get it, sure. Screwin' around, having fun. I get it, I do. So just let me out, and we can â€¦ we can have a few beers and a laugh over it, okay?"

George did not mention that whatever beer he drank with this asshole would definitely be the man's last. He gave the masked stranger his most affable smile. He was not bad-looking, he thought, and when he wanted to, he could really pull off the old 'one of the boys' charm.

"A few beers?"

The voice was muffled, but familiar. George could not quite place it, but he knew he had heard it before.

"Yeah," he said. "Yeah. Bars still open? My watch seems to have stopped or something. Ha. Well, I have some at home, anyway. Come on, we'll drink a little, laugh the whole thing off. Whaddaya say?"

"I say â€¦" The stranger fiddled with the gas mask, and then lifted it off. "I say, that's not good enough, Sewell."

George stared at the face for a moment, stricken dumb with surprise. Then, he burst into laughter. The formerly masked man scowled darkly.

"Oh, Jesus, Pendleton!" George exclaimed, still laughing. "Oh thank God, it's just you, cupcake. Ah ha ha! Hey, open this up, all right?"

Now it was Murphy Pendleton's turn to be dumb-stricken.

"Just me? _Just me_? How the hell can you say that?" he asked, infuriated. "Don't you get it? _I _put you in there, Sewell!"

"Yeah, obviously, I know," George said. He snorted, shaking his head. "Oh, man, you just don't know when to quit, do you, cupcake?"

"What the hell does that mean? What is wrong with you?"

George laughed again, shaking his head. That was all the innocent little dessert amounted to in the end, wasn't it? 'Why' this, and 'what' that. Yeah, the man was a first-timer, some father on an idiot revenge plot he saw on some crime drama or movie, but come on. He had been naive in Ryall State, but this was really taking the â€¦ well, cake.

"Stop laughing!" Pendleton demanded, as if he could demand anything with authority. "What the hell is so funny?"

"What's so funny? You, cupcake, you," George informed him. He stifled his laughter and looked the man up and down through the bars. "So let me get this straight, right? You have the luck of the Devil himself

and survive a prison bus crash, escape, and actually manage to stay off the radar for two weeks, and thenâ€œwhat?"

George leaned right up to the bars, bringing his face close to Pendleton's. The man swallowed, and could not meet his eyes. Yeah, the old fear was there. They were both killers, but there was a world of difference between a man that killed for revenge once and a man that killed as he needed to. George had once thought Pendleton was his kind of man, but he had disappointed him. He was weak, and now that chink in the armor would serve George well.

"You miss me so much that you just had to come back, huh, cupcake?" George asked. He was aware of the closeness between them, how their breaths mingled. All these weak ones in prison were fags, anyway; Pendleton was probably enjoying it, and he could use that, too. "Couldn't stay away, could you?"

"No. _No. _I justâ€œ"

"You just wanted to see me one more time," George mocked him. "I'm touched. Really, I am, Pendleton. It's sweet. So why don't you let me out of here and we can catch up?"

"You really think I just have some obsession with you?" Pendleton asked angrily. "For fuck's sake, what is _wrong _with you? Have you taken a good look around, Sewell? Do you think we're still at Ryall? We're _not in Ryall State_!"

The words cemented the displaced dread George had been feeling. He tightened his lips into a grim line, and was quiet a moment. He would have thought it a lie, some dumb attempt on Pendleton's part to scare him, but he had known it all along. This was not his prison.

"Do you know where we are?" Pendleton continued, knowing he had struck a nerve. "You ever hear of a place called 'Silent Hill'?"

George looked at him, narrowing his dark eyes. He allowed no expression to cross his face.

"You want out? Sure. Why not? Go ahead." Pendleton squeakily turned a key in the rusted old prison door lock. "Go, see for yourself. Explore the town. Run, if you want to. Run, the way I ran! Go on! Go!"

Pendleton unlocked the door. George licked his lips, staring at him. He had to admit, he almost admired Pendleton for coming this far, for trying so hard to take power over him. It was the kind of stunt he would have pulledâ€œif he were half an idiot and desperate, like Murphy Pendleton was.

"Are you still laughing?" Pendleton asked. He grabbed George by the front of his shirt suddenly and slammed him against the bars. "The fuck is so funny? If you knew where you were, you wouldn't be laughing."

"If I knew where I was?" George mused. He flicked Pendleton's hands off of himself and pushed him back. "Oh, cupcake, do I ever know where I am."

"The hell is that supposed to mean?" Pendleton's confidence was fading fast. He had obviously expected to be in complete control, and was back to being his old weak self now that his plans had fallen through.

"What I mean, cupcake, isâ€" " George pushed past the man, bumping his shoulder as he went. He turned back and gave the man a grin. "â€"I was born in Silent Hill. I know _exactly_ _where_ we are."

George looked around. They were near a guard station in an underground prison. He elbowed the radio, and "Born Free" began playing again after a burst of static. He whistled along, searching the decrepit wooden desk. Predictably, his things were in there. He snapped on his leather gloves, and put his baton in its holder on his belt. He tried his radio, but it only gave him interference on all channels. No matter. All he needed was a phone, or the nearest police officer. Pendleton was done, _really_ _done_ this time. The poor sap had always been doomed. He had tried to help him, toughen him up, show him how the real world worked, but the man stubbornly remained rooted in some juvenile justice fantasy. It was enough to make you want to throw upâ€"from pity or disgust or both, George couldn't say, he just hated weakness.

"No. No, you're not."

"What's that, cupcake? I didn't hear you."

Pendleton had been plodding before, and weighed down by ankle cuffs. He moved fast now, too fast for George to catch him. He was upon him suddenly, slamming him over the desk, whose wood crumbled beneath his face as his skin hit it. George struggled, but Pendleton had gotten stronger. Good for him, George thought dryly, contemplating the man's murder.

"You're not getting away that easy!" Pendleton yelled at him. His grip tightened on George's arm. "No. _No_! I didn't bring you here just to let you go like that!"

"_You_ brought me here? Ha! Give me a break, cupcake," George said. It did cross his mind that using the condescending nickname might not be the best way to get away from the obviously troubled ex-convict, but he could not help it: Pendleton was a cupcake through and through, even now, and it just slipped out. "What'd you do? Drug me? Throw me in here? Where are we? Toluca Prison, right?"

"How did you know?"

"I told you!" George could not push Pendleton off, much to his chagrin, but he managed to twist around. He was still embarrassingly beneath the man, but at least now he could look him in the eyes. Those damned sheep eyes. "I was _born here_! This is my hometown, goddamnit! I don't know what you thought, people get weird ideas about this town, but it ain't shit to me! All right? It's just my fucking hometown!"

"Jesus," Pendleton swore softly. He was so surprised that he let George go, standing away from him as if he were diseased. "You were born here? You _lived_ â€| here?"

"Yeah, big deal." George stood up straight, shrugging his shoulders

into place. Pendleton was a lot stronger than he remembered. "A lot of people live here, right? So what?"

Pendleton stared at him like the idiot he was. George considered whacking him with the baton, but he didn't know what weapons Pendleton might have under that ridiculous coat of his. He was dressed like some fireman out of hell, though the getup looked less imposing without the gas mask.

"Hell is up with you, anyway?" George asked. "You supposed to be some kind of horror movie villain, or what?"

"The Bogeyman."

"Riiight," George said. That settled it, the dumbass had lost his mind. Better not to mess with him alone, and besides, he wasn't worth it. "Well. It's been real, cupcake. I'll see you on the other side."

"The _what_? What did you say?"

George shrugged Pendleton's paranoia off. He took his baton out of the holder again, twirled it, and headed down the hall. He whistled "Born Free" as he went. Pendleton called out to him, but he ignored him. As he expected, the man did not follow. Well, once a coward, always a coward.

2. Chapter 2

2

George Sewell twirled his baton as he walked through the halls of Toluca Prison. It was deep underground, half sunken beneath the lake from which it took its name, and he could smell the fetid odor of water and rot. He knew the place in name only, as dumb older kids looking for some supernatural adventures used to break into it and told the tales at his high school, so long ago. His mother had known the truth about it, as she had worked at the Historical Society, which had been built above the old prison. She had always said never to go there.

_No kiddin', ma, _George thought bitterly. He dragged his baton across the filthy walls, scraping the drywall and crumbling thick black and white fungus. _This place is the shithole to end them all._

It was painfully quiet. George almost wished that dumbass Pendleton had followed him, if anything to make conversation with. But his footsteps were the only ones in the place, clicking on ancient stone, squishing through mud. Stunted pale plants and fungal growths made the air noxious, thicker than even normal underground atmosphere. He felt dirty for even breathing it.

George began to think of the other dirty smells he'd experienced in his lifetime. He knew blood, but it had never smelled dirty to him: blood could smell refreshing, even cleansing, if it blended into the right moment. Some of his best days had been drenched in the smell of coppery, meaty blood. The smell of blood was honest, more honest than all the cleansing scents human meat perfumed itself with daily. Blood

was no problem.

The antiseptic tang of the cover-up had always irritated him. It was necessary, he knew that, but that chlorine-over-excrement odor nonetheless irked him. It was dishonest, he figured. In older times, he would have been a hero for shedding the blood of the worthless, and that cowardly odor of lies only proved how mealymouthed the public's idea of justice had become. Actions and manipulations he should have been rewarded for were mopped into anonymity by that artificial odor.

There was none of that artifice here in the old Toluca Prison, so at least that was something. The smell was real, only it was _too_ real. The fungus smelled too meaty, almost human, and the rust smelled too like blood, as if metal could bleed. It was surreal, George decided, that was the problem. Real blood and real meat, okay, but there was not a corpse in sight, yet he smelled the flesh rotting, he smelled the stale blood coagulating Christ, what a fucking stench!

How long had he been walking? His hometown, he had said so smugly to Pendleton. Yeah, his hometown, but he always felt like he was walking in circles whenever he was there. Apparently, Toluca Prison was no different, even if it had been built more than two hundred years ago. How many dumb kids had gone missing here, just during his youth alone? No wonder. Good riddance to them, but no wonder. The poor stupid bastards had never had a chance in a place like this.

George coughed. The sound was loud in the absolute quiet, and he did not like the bronchial depth of it. Fucking Pendleton had kept him locked in that dank cell for too long. What a complete

George's angry thoughts were interrupted by a glimmer of light. He blew out a breath he hadn't realized he had been holding. He had always been a night person, and a rain person, like everyone in this area, but goddamn him if he wasn't happy to see sunlight. He walked more quickly towards the thin white beams, thinking of rescue, and then of the glory of recapturing Pendleton. Fresh air and accolades, what could be better?

The sunlight was coming from a few breaks in the wall above a steep pile of rubble. Well, all of life was basically a pile of rubble, or worse, George figured. He put his baton on his belt and climbed. Stones fell, he slipped, he tore the knee of his slacks out and gashed his knee, but he went on. His fingers bit into dirt and rubble, but the earth smelled fresher as he climbed. Pain bit a finger and he hissed, knowing a fingernail had snapped off. Still, he climbed, shoes slipping and hands scraping. Nothing ever came easy in this town, he knew that. Funny, how he was back here after so long, after so much. Yeah, real funny. Life was a hilarious bitch, all right.

The final wall crumbled away. George was nearly blinded by a blast of sunlight. He shielded his eyes with his arm, blinking. Fresh air greeted his nose and mouth, but it was dank, tasted of moist. Yeah, he was home. He gulped a breath of the air down and finished burrowing his way out. His uniform was filthy and his arms trembled from effort, but he was finally standing in daylight.

George burst out whistling "Born Free" in triumph, though the melody

was dry and shook on his lips. He took his baton out and twirled it as he walked, eyes darting around anxiously. The remnants of Toluca Prison were no longer visible, only the dowdy Silent Hill Historical Society that had been built atop its remnants. He had come out onto a courtyard very near the shore of Toluca Lake. The waters were inky and morose, as they had always been.

_When I get Pendleton, I'm gonna hurt him, _George thought serenely.
_Oh yeah. I'm going to hurt him like I've never hurt anyone before.

-

"Hey wait! Sewell? Sewell!"

George stopped walking near the chain-link fence that surrounded the property. Pendleton had followed him? Through all that? And he had never heard it? He was less than forty, but he must have been getting old.

"Yeah, what are youâ€"ooh!"

The ground was shaking. George stumbled back and gripped the chain-link, hearing it rattle with schoolyard fervor in his ears. Pendleton was running at him, in that ridiculous get-up. Where the hell had he found that? And why had he put it on? Did he think that was scary? Even for an ingenue, that was green â€| everyone was so stupid sometimes, so naive â€| didn't they get how the world was? Didn't they see? "Bogeyman", he had said. The only Bogeymen George knew were the human kind, the kind that reared their ugly heads after daddy was six beers into his daily twelve-pack.

George felt dizzy again. He held onto the fence tightly, but his knees buckled. He fell to the ground, and felt it restlessly shaking beneath his bones. He remembered these quakes well from childhood. He had always hated how they diminished him, how they had thrust him to the floor, no different from the way his father bullied him off his feet, no different at all.

"Get the fuck off!" George exclaimed before he even knew who had touched him. Of course, it was Pendleton. He struggled to stand on his own. "Don't youâ€" " He coughed, lungs full of whatever shit he had breathed in the prison. "â€|don't you fucking touch me, you â€| you fucking â€| asshole, you â€| "

The earth shook again, rattling him off his feet. He gripped onto the other man before he could stop himself. The tremors went straight through him, it seemed, and that sharp tone rang in his ears again. He reeled back into Pendleton's arms, and then everything went black.

* * *

><p>He woke up on a bench, and the first thing he saw was that god-awful painting that hung in the Historical Society, "Misty Day, Remains of the Judgment". It showed bodies hanging inside rectangular metal frames, retreating into the misty white background, with a strange humanoid figure standing before them all, proud as a butcher presenting his cuts. The thing was masculine, and wore an apron and gloves as all butchers of men and animals did. He held a long, sharp-pointed spear in one hand, which cut sharply across the canvas, straight across the bodies in the background, and there was a red

pyramid-shaped helmet or something on his head, completely covering itâ€”or perhaps that was his head. George stared at that thing now, hating it as he had when he was a child. The indifferent cruelty of the pyramid-headed thing glared back at him.

"Do you know what's up with that?"

George turned his head on the bench, wincing at a headache. Pendleton had removed the coat, and looked more normal now in jeans, a shirt, and a green jacket. He sat on a chair nearby, looking forlorn and lost.

"It's shit art, who cares?" George grumbled, though his eyes kept sliding to the disturbing image. He forced himself to sit up, grunting as his head throbbed. "What's up with you?"

"Me?"

"Yeah, you, you idiot!" George snapped. "Why didn't you just stay gone? I'm gonna either get you right back to Ryall, or I'm gonna kill you, you know that, don't you?"

"You can't kill me."

"Oh yeah?" George got to his feet, though the room swam before his eyes. He swallowed down nausea and curled his gloved hands into fists. "Wanna test that theory?"

"I'm already dead," Pendleton said hollowly. He didn't even look up at George, let alone stand. "I'm dead. You're dead. We're dead, Sewell, that's why we're here, why we'll _always _be here."

"You're an idiot," George sneered in disgust. The anger left him, and he felt a little lost himself without it. He turned his back on the painting and walked around the small museum room. "So what did you do? I don't remember being kidnapped. You drug me or something? Drive us all the way the fuck out here?"

"No," Pendleton said. "No, I only put you in the cell down below. I thoughtâ€”It doesn't matter what I thought."

"Then how did I get here?" George asked. "I sure as hell don't go out of my way to visit Silent Hill."

"I don't know," Pendleton said. "All I know is, I tried to get away. I tried like hell. I went out on my own, lived rough for a while, thought about going North. I tried to talk to Carol, but she didn'tâ€”I guess she _couldn't _forgive me. After that, I just walked. I remember walking in the cold, walking nowhere, just going, and then I woke up back in Silent Hill. I woke up by Pleasant River about a week ago. I don't remember this part of town from when I first came here, so I walked around a bit. I found these clothes here in the museum, displayed in a case. Then I found _you_."

"Found me?"

"You were unconscious outside on the shore of the lake," Pendleton explained. "I woke up and went to the boat launch yesterday morning, thinking about crossing the lake, and there you were. I had this whole revenge plan to keep you locked up, to terrorize you the way

you terrorized me, but I just don't care enough to do it now. I don't care about anything anymore."

"I never terrorized you, cupcake, you did that all on your own," George said. He was only half-invested in the conversation, however. His amnesia of the past few days was troubling, and he knew there was no way that he would have brought himself to Silent Hill. "I think you're still trying to get some kind of twisted revenge, though. You must have kidnapped me and brought me here. No way I just magically appeared here, that's bullshit!"

Pendleton said nothing. George lifted him from the chair and slammed him against the wall. The man did not resist. He looked down at George with a half-pitying, half-vacant look that made George's blood boil.

"Stop lying to me!" George yelled at him. He punched the wall beside Pendleton's face and slammed him again. "Goddamn it, tell me what you did to me! Tell me the truth, you sick bastard! You found out about me, didn't you? You said you'd been to Silent Hill before, right? Someone told you this was my hometown, so you grabbed me and brought me here, isn't that right? What did you drug me with? What did you give me?"

"I didn't do anything to you," Pendleton insisted. He began to get angry, grabbing George's arm where it was pressing into his throat. "I don't know why you're here! Ask yourself that! Leave me out of your problems for once, Sewell. I have nothing to do with it!"

"Don't you lie to me!" George punched the man in the face. The impact felt blissfully good. "Stop lying! You did something to me! Tell me what you did!"

George gave him a hefty blow to the stomach. He lifted his fist to punch him again, but Pendleton shoved him off balance. The ex-con swung back and punched him across the face. George touched the bruise across his jaw in shock, and then spat blood, smiled.

"You've changed, Pendleton. Finally grew a pair, huh?"

"I'm not your prisoner anymore!" _cupcake_.

George shook his head at the lame attempt at a shot back. He went at Pendleton, who met him almost eagerly. He really had gotten stronger. No matter. George had taken on bigger chumps than him, you just had to hit them where they were soft.

Pendleton had apparently learned this lesson, too, unfortunately. He took quite a few blows that would have crippled the old Murphy Pendleton, and then gave George a punch in the gut that knocked the wind out of him. He tackled him and they both fell to the floor. George's head smacked hard against the floor, and pain blinded him momentarily. Pendleton hit him across the face, and he felt the enjoyment in it. The man hit him again and again: across the face, on the body, everywhere.

"You bastard. You bastard!" Pendleton yelled at him. "Do you know the hell you put me through? What you let me do to Napier? What you did to Frank Coleridge? He was a better man than both of us! And

youâ€"youâ€" "

Pendleton backhanded him across the face, but there was not much force in it. George coughed, wincing, trying to accept the fact that he had been beaten by Murphy Pendleton. _It's the headache, _he told himself. _If it weren't for this goddamn headache â€| _

"You're not even worth it," Pendleton said dully. He climbed off of George, sighing. He wiped blood from his broken lip on the back of his hand.

"Don't you walk away from me," George scowled. He struggled to his feet. "We're not done yet, cupcake."

"I'm done, Sewell. I'm done."

George went at him again. Pendleton was irritated by a punch to the ribs, but not riled enough to fight back. He struggled with George, managing to wrestle him down to the floor again. He pinned George's arms behind his back with effort, and then George felt the snap of cold metal around his wrists.

"Hey!" he shouted furiously. "Those are my handcuffs!"

"Yeah," was all Pendleton said.

"You son-of-a-bitch! Get these off of me or I'm gonna chain your balls to your throat with them, you stupid piece of shit!"

"I think you need some time to yourself to cool down," Pendleton said. He stood up, leaving the man on his stomach with his arms cuffed behind his back. "I'll just give you a few minutes, cupcake."

"Stop fucking calling me that!"

George struggled to get up, apoplectic with rage. He got his knees on the floor, but Pendleton gave his ass a kick, which sent him right back down. George rolled onto his back, face burning with humiliation, and glowered up at the man. Pendleton seemed mildly amused, and walked around him. He went over to the creepy painting and stood in front of it. George stared over at him in disbelief. Outside, a soft patter of rain brushed the little building.

"Huh," Pendleton said, "how about that? It's raining again."

George was filled with hatred, but he managed to bite down the responses that rose to his lips. Giving Pendleton the satisfaction of seeing him upset was the last thing he wanted to do; the condescending amusement in the man's eyes when he looked down at him had stung worse than any of his punches. He wriggled his wrists against the cuffs, but they only tightened further. Aggravated and disappointed with himself for letting Pendleton get the better of him, George lay on his back for a minute. Pendleton was stock still by the painting. It was absolutely silent except for the hushing fall of the rain.

"I knew it," George finally said. It took some maneuvering, but he managed to get up onto his feet. "You really are my kind of guy, cupcake. Too bad you weren't like this back at old Ryall State. Think

of all the drama we could have avoided if you had just done me my favor that time."

Pendleton turned from the painting. He stood directly next to the pyramid-headed thing. George had the strangest impression of being judged by both of them, and it brought a flush to his face.

"You knew I wouldn't kill Coleridge," Pendleton said slowly, "and you were perfectly capable of doing that yourself. So why did you want me there?"

"I didn't _know _anything," George said. "I told you, I thought you were my kind of guy. I thought you wouldn't let me down. I gave you the benefit of the doubt, gave you a chance to come through for me. I thought you might let me down, but I hoped you wouldn't."

"Coleridge was a good man," Pendleton said. "You didn't even finish him off. He suffered for years, trapped inside his own ruined body. He didn't deserve that."

"You don't know shit about it," George snarled. "Coleridge was a highhanded prick. He was trying to get me fired! Opening his mouth about a stand-up guy like me, meanwhile enabling all the scumbags on the inside! He was a fucking hypocrite!"

"He tried to see the good in people."

"Yeah? What about me?"

"There's nothing good about you, Sewell."

The remark got on Sewell's nerves, for reasons he could not entirely discern. He decided not to waste any more time talking to Pendleton. He paced the room, looking for something to get the handcuffs off with. There was nothing. He left the room and turned into another display area.

There were more disturbing paintings and images in the other room. He stared at a picture of hooded cultists for a minute, then turned away scowling. He remembered his mother, whose dark eyes he had inherited, shuffling around these rooms, straightening these paintings and pictures. She loved this damned town and its crazy culture. Sometimes he thought that the only love she had for him stemmed solely from the fact that he had been born in Silent Hill and was thus a part of its history.

_She'd be happy I'm back now, _George thought darkly. _I gotta get out of this town._

There was an iron maiden in the corner of the room, partially open. The spikes inside looked sharp. Reluctantly, George backed into the few inches parting the doors, trying to catch the chain of the handcuffs on the spikes. He scraped the chain against the spikes, the grating noise hurting his ears.

Suddenly, George heard a soft sound like humming. He knew the voice and the melody instantly. It was impossible for his dead mother to be singing as she dusted the frames, but he turned towards the sound regardless. He saw a glimpse of practical heels and a black skirt retreat behind a door, caught a whiff of floral perfume—an oil made

from those local flowers, White Claudia.

George started after the apparition, but the handcuff chain caught on the hinge of the iron maiden's door. There was a grinding noise, and then the thing toppled over. George stumbled back, and was pushed to the floor by it. He landed between the two open doors, mere inches from row upon row of metal spikes. The iron maiden doors were like a mouth open around him, and as the doors slipped, the spikes bore down on him. His eyes were exactly level with two spikes. He did not dare to breathe, afraid anything could bring the spikes down upon him. There was a metallic creak, and the spikes came closer. He swallowed heavily, turning his face to try to shield his eyes.

"Pâ€Pendleton!" he croaked. He felt a prick of metal sink into his cheek. "Pendleton!"

Pendleton came into the room. He raised his eyebrows at the sight of his nemesis trapped between the jaws of the iron maiden on the floor. To George's amazement, the man did not seem inclined to help him.

"Get this fucking thing off me!" George demanded. Spikes dug into his shoulder, piercing his skin. "Now!"

"What? No 'cupcake' this time?" Pendleton asked. He knelt down in front of Sewell, still not moving a hand to help him. "You could be more polite about it, though."

"I'll politely hand you your ass if you don't get me out of this!" George exclaimed. "You think this is a joke? This thing is going to kill me!"

"I told you, you wouldn't die," Pendleton said. He ran a hand over the smooth outer shell of the iron maiden. "We're already dead."

George didn't like the look in Pendleton's eyes, it was far too familiar. The iron maiden shifted almost imperceptibly, but he felt the spikes digging harder into his skin. Pendleton's mouth quirked slightly. He was enjoying this.

"You asshole," George said. "You said there was nothing good about me, but what kind of man does this? Huh? You're no different than me, Pendleton! You might have been too much of a pussy to end Coleridge, but that doesn't change anything! You're just like me!"

"Maybe I am," Pendleton said thoughtfully. "You're right, Sewell. Maybe I always was."

"Then you better pray this thing kills me," George said. "If it doesn't, it won't even matter if you are already dead, I'll kill you again, you bastard."

"All right, come on," Pendleton said, laying both hands on the iron maiden. "I'm not just going to leave you to beâ€oops."

The thing slipped, and George's heart skipped a beat. Pain ripped through his arm and he was unable to stop a scream. The smell of his own blood was sickening, and his head swam with dizziness. The spikes

tore impossibly deeper through his skin. A spike was close enough for his eyelash to graze it when he blinked.

"Get it off!" he shrieked at Pendleton, panic overcoming pride. "Get it off! Get it the fuck off of me!"

He seemed to take his sweet ass time about it, but finally Pendleton heaved the iron maiden off. George scrambled out from beneath it, bloody shreds of his sleeve and shirt still fluttering on the spikes. When he was clear of it, Pendleton dropped it. The metal casket hit the floor with a resounding boom, and then all was quiet again.

"How the hell did that happen?" Pendleton asked, coming over and kneeling in front of George. His tone was that of a person talking to a precocious child. "What did you do?"

"I was trying to get these cuffs off," George said, shaking with rage and pain. "The hell do you think I was doing?"

Pendleton shook his head at him patronizingly. He took out the key to the cuffs and released George. George rubbed his shredded arm, glaring at him. He wanted to hurt him badly, but he was beginning to realize that Pendleton was no longer a threat to take so lightly. Abashed by his trepidation, George bowed his head over his arm, fingering the myriad deep cuts.

"That looks painful," Pendleton observed. He glanced over at the iron maiden almost affectionately. "They don't make them like that anymore."

George ignored him, getting to his feet. Until he could get his hands on a firearm, it would be best to leave Pendleton to himself. Once he had him under his control, he could peel away his layers, find out what had caused this interesting change of character.

The earth rumbled, and George felt dizzy. He was losing a lot of blood. He staggered against the wall and leaned there for a minute. His head was pounding now. His vision swam and then went black. A moment, he told himself, he would just rest a moment.

The smell of White Claudia roused him. He heard the humming, and staggered towards it.

"Ma?" he murmured, in a daze. "Hey, ma, it's dad again. I think he broke my arm. It hurts. God, it hurts."

George found his mother with the paintings, of course. Her back was to him, long black hair trailing down past her hips, dull and loose. She was wiping a bronzed frame with a cloth. Had she heard him? Would she even care?

"Ma, he broke it," the man said petulantly. "Did you hear me? He broke my arm."

The woman resumed humming her song, polishing the frame.

"Why don't you listen to me?" George asked heatedly. "Why don't you ever hear what I tell you about dad? Why don't you hear me? Why don't you fucking turn around and look at me! Turn around! Just turn around!"

George rushed over to her, and shook her by the shoulder with his good arm. The cloth fell to the floor, but she did not face him. Infuriated, George turned his mother around and

stared into a hollow of pointed teeth, like the spikes of the iron maiden, beneath empty white eyes. The flesh around the pit of a mouth slouched away, ripe with death, and a stench of rot broke through the sickly perfume of White Claudia.

George gasped, choked on the odors. He pushed the thing away, and cried out in shock and fear. The thing that was and was not his mother shambled after him. He screamed this time, and then knew nothing else.

3. Chapter 3

****3****

George woke up to find himself lying in a real bed. For a minute, he told himself he had had the dumbest nightmare of his life, but he was home now. The fantasy stuck for about two seconds before the pain shot through his arm. He gritted his teeth and looked up. Pendleton was sitting on the edge of the bed beside him, bandaging his arm up. The sight was so ludicrous that George could only stare at him for a moment.

"If you're right and we're not dead," Pendleton explained, "then I can't have you dying on me yet, can I?"

George went to sit up, but his uninjured arm was held fast. He looked around and saw that he was handcuffed to the rails of the headboard. He was annoyed, but not surprised. Pendleton was not as stupid as he used to be.

"Just can't let me go, can you?" George said. He rattled the handcuffs. "You've gotten clingy and a little bit kinky since we parted, haven't you, cupcake?"

"I was going to let you go, Sewell, but then I realized something." Pendleton calmly wound a bandage around George's shoulder, down his cut-up arm. "Seeing you under that iron maiden, I realized why I was so happy when I found you on the beach the other morning."

"Stockholm Syndrome?" George guessed. "True love?"

"Hate," Pendleton said simply. "I hate you, Sewell. I've only hated one other person so much in my entire life, and I killed that man"as you know."

"You only got to kill him because of me," George said. "I gave Patrick Napier to you."

"I know. How could I forget, after everything you made me do because of it?" Pendleton said. His grip on George's arm tightened momentarily, then relaxed. He finished bandaging the arm and turned to George with a smile. "But not you. No one handed you to me." He reached out and took George's face in his hand. "I took you, and I

have you, and I'm going to keep you, because the moment I saw you under that torture device, I knew what I wanted from you."

"I'm guessing it's not to live happily ever after, huh, cupcake?"

"Well, _I'll _be happy," Pendleton said. He was stroking the side of George's face, and now ran his hand into his black hair. His grip tightened suddenly, and he pulled the man's head back by his hair. "I'll be very happy, doing to you every sick thing you ever did to me."

"So the victim becomes the abuser?" George scoffed. "You're a fucking stereotype, Pendleton."

"No. No, I'm not becoming you, Sewell," Pendleton said. "And I was never a victim. My son was a victim: completely innocent, he paid the price of another person's choices. I chose everything that came after his death myself. I chose to chase Napier into prison. I chose to deal with you to kill him with my own hands. I chose to try to go along with your 'favor'. It was all on me, just like what happens to you next will all be on you."

"Nice try, but you don't scare me, cupcake," George said. He used his bandaged arm to hit Pendleton's hand out of his hair. "I ran Ryall State, everyone but that asshole Coleridge knew it, and you think I'm afraid of _you_? Ha! Don't get me wrong, this act of yours is cute and everything, cupcake, but that's _all _it is: an act."

"Tell that to Napier."

"You think that counts for anything?" George asked. "It was like putting down a rabid dog. Napier wasn't even a human being."

"Oh, and you are?"

"Of course I am!" George said, outraged. "What the hell do you think of me?"

"That you beat an innocent man to death right in front of me?" Pendleton reminded him. He grabbed George by his wounded arm, hard. "And that you framed me for it? What do I think of you, Sewell? I think you're about as human as Napier was, maybe less!"

"Don't be ridiculous!" George scowled. He tried to pull his arm away, but the man's fingers dug into his tender skin tightly. He saw fresh blood seeping through the white bandages. "You think I'd do the things that sick freak did to kids? I'd never hurt a kid."

"No, it's adults you get off on torturing, huh?"

"That's right!" George burst out. He realized the way the admission sounded, and resolved to calm himself. He grinned at Pendleton. "You really don't understand anything, do you? You think you know me, cupcake? You don't know shit about me."

"Well, maybe you should tell me," Pendleton said. He released the man's arm. "We have nothing but time now, after all."

"Give that death crap a rest, would you?" George said irritably. He

curled his arm to his chest protectively. "You want to know about me, do you, cupcake? What's there to say? That I spread drugs throughout the inmate population to watch those assholes eat each other up like the cannibal savages they were? Fine, so I did, and yeah, I enjoyed it. I'm not gonna apologize for enjoying watching criminals suffer. I don't think you can judge me for that."

"No, I can't," Pendleton said quietly. "And me?"

"What about you?" George said, shrugging his good shoulder. "You got incarcerated so that you could take a shot at the man that murdered your little boy. I gave you that monster. _I _served him on a fucking platter for you! And this is the thanks I get? You not only let me down when I need you the most, you kidnap me, bring me here to torture me? You're a fucking ingrate, Pendleton!"

Pendleton stared at him for a long moment. George's impotent rage began to feel stupid, so he struggled to stifle it again. His face was burning with anger and humiliation, which in turn made his head hurt again. The smell of the blood soaking the bandages was making him nauseous. It had been many years since he had felt this shitty, or this helpless.

"It actually _hurt_ you when I didn't kill Coleridge for you, didn't it?" Pendleton said incredulously. George gave him a weary look, not denying it, and Pendleton laughed. "Jesus Christ. I thought you were just pissed, but it was more than that, wasn't it? You honestly felt betrayed."

"I _was_ betrayed," George said bitterly. "I handed you your son's killer, and you couldn't even do one simple favor for me."

"You call killing an innocent man 'simple'?"

"He wasn't what you thought he was!" George insisted. "You think I was going to kill him just because he planned to file a complaint against me? You think I wasn't ever going to give him a chance? I went to that bastard! I begged him not to file it! Me, Pendleton, I begged, practically on my knees—" I would have gotten on my knees if he asked it! I told him I would do anything, and I meant it! I _meant _it. I told him that my job was all I had. I told him that he was going to ruin my life with that goddamned complaint. I told him he was taking everything from me, everything I had worked for, everything I had built! I told him that! And you know what he did?"

Pendleton said nothing. George sat up straighter, bringing their faces level.

"That bastard just gave me this look, like I was his poor, stupid, disobedient son," George said, his dark eyes flashing with fury at the memory. "He said I had gone too far and it was too late. He didn't even say he was sorry, just that it was what he 'had to do'. Had to do, my ass! It was a choice he was making, Pendleton! You get choices, don't you? At least you own up to your choices, but Coleridge? He talked like he was some fucking martyr on his way to the cross! 'Had to'! Had to ruin my life? Had to take everything away from me? And why? Do you know why, cupcake, because that's the real funny part."

"Because he was an honest man, Sewell," Pendleton said.

"You're so fucking naive," George said disdainfully. "No, it wasn't because he was just too honest to cover for me. You know what it was? He couldn't stand that I was doing bad things to his precious prisoners."

"No, I don't thinkâ€"

"No, you don't think very much, do you, cupcake?" George said. "At least give it a try, huh? For me? Think about it! Remember how nice he was to you? How understanding? You think it was just because you were a grieving father? You think he was just that way with you? Ha! Sorry to wreck your little romance, cupcake, but it wasn't just you; he was like that with all the prisoners! He saw the good in everyone, indiscriminately, even if he was just making it up. He couldn't forgive me a few transgressions, but he would do anything to protect the murderers and rapists and all the other scumbags in Ryall."

Pendleton looked doubtful, but his brow was creased in thought. George moved closer, their profiles almost touching. He decided to drive the point home.

"Even Napier."

Pendleton turned to him, their noses brushing. George smirked. Seeing that stricken, hurt look in Pendleton's sheep eyes was almost erotically pleasurable.

"You're lying," Pendleton said. He grabbed George by the front of his shirt and shook him. "That's a lie!"

"It's not," George said, calmed by smugness. "You spent your life in your shitty little cell. You only saw us guards when we needed youâ€"or wanted you, in my case."

Pendleton raised a hand, but did not hit him. He was still uncertain whether George was telling the truth or not about Coleridge. George's grin widened.

"The rest of us ate together, filed reports, basically shot the shit for most of the day," George went on. "I was with Coleridge when we 'found' Napier. You shoulda seen the disgust on his face. That's what it was, Pendleton, that's how he felt about what you did to that animal: he was disgusted by it. He knew what Napier was, we all knew, hell. But he was a human being. That's what Coleridge said to me. 'He was a human being, what kind of monster does this to another human being?' I shit you not, he said that, word for word. I remember because it almost made me laugh right in his stupid fucking face."

Pendleton was frozen with shock. He slowly lowered the hand he had left raised to strike with, and let it fall on his lap between them. He still held George by his shirt, seeming to have forgotten to let him go.

"You poor idiot, you really believed in that Coleridge, huh?" George said. He snorted in amusement. "Meanwhile, if he had known you were the one that killed Napier, he wouldn't have looked at you with all

that sympathy you sucked up like a whore on a five-dollar blowjob. He would have told you you were wrong to kill Napier. He would have judged you, cupcake. He would have gotten on his high horse and judged you for putting down a man that got wet over killing kidsâ€”that probably wet himself over killing _your _kid, andâ€”"

"That's enough!" Pendleton backhanded the man. "Shut up! Just shut up, Sewell!"

Pendleton shook him, slapped him again, and then let him go. He looked spent, emptied of everything that had ever kept his engines running. He bowed over his knees, holding his head in both hands. His light brown hair fell over his face, and George could no longer see his expression.

"Coleridge felt sorry for Napier, just like he felt sorry for you," George pressed. "Sorry isn't worth a damn in this world. And you betrayed me over a guy like that. I gave you more than 'sorry', didn't I? I gave you what really mattered. I gave you the monster that killed your kid, killed him when he was alone and terrified, probably crying out for you. I gave you that piece of shit. I deserved better than to be betrayed for a sniveling fool like Coleridge."

Pendleton was quiet, and very still. George leaned forward as much as he could with one arm cuffed to the bed.

"Or do you still think Frank Coleridge was a better man than both of us?" he asked. "Do you agree with him? Was Patrick Napier still just a 'human being', do you think?"

"No!" Pendleton said through his teeth. He turned his face to George's, and his eyes were colder than they ever had been. "No. Napier wasn't human, and I don't regret killing him. I was dead until I found that man in front of me. Killing him, that was â€| that was the last time I felt alive. Until now."

"Now?" George asked, unable to completely hide his anxiety.

"You." Pendleton gave George an eerie smile. He reached out and held him by the back of the neck. His hand was cold, made all the colder by the malice in his touch. "_You_, cupcake. Seeing you hurt has made me feel as alive as killing Napier did. Because you're right, I'm not like Coleridge. I could never be like that, and I don't want to be. We are more alike than I ever imagined, Sewell. I enjoy seeing men pay for their sins as much as you do."

"Now wait a minute!" George protested. "You can appreciate my giving you Napier now, right? And you know Coleridge wasn't worth much. So why are you still trying to â€| to punish me?"

"Because you still hurt me, Sewell," Pendleton said. "You hurt me irreparably. Don't act like you were my ally, because you weren't. You made that deal with me because you knew you could use it to manipulate me later, not because of anything Napier did."

"That's not true! Iâ€”"

"Shut up!" Pendleton pressed his hand over George's mouth. He climbed

over him, straddling the man easily, his hand crushing his mouth hard enough to bruise him. "Shut up, Sewell. You listen. Yes, you handed me Napier"and then you never let me have my vengeance in peace. You turned the best thing in my life into a nightmare. Always hanging that favor over my head, making me do all those dehumanizing things so that you would keep my secret. And for what? For you to make me watch you murder an innocent man"an idiot, maybe, but Coleridge was still an innocent man"and frame me for it? And you still made me serve you, because you knew that if I had Coleridge and Napier on my record, I would never see daylight again. You tortured _me, _you son-of-a-bitch, you're damned right I'm still going to punish you!"

Pendleton removed his hand from George's mouth, but for once, George was stunned speechless. Pendleton patted his cheek patronizingly, climbing off of him.

"And you may not believe me, but we have forever all to ourselves now," Pendleton said. "We have all this time and this whole crazy town. Your town, as it turns out. Welcome home, _cupcake_, and welcome to hell."

With that, Pendleton left the room. George heard the door being locked from the outside. Only now did he recognize the room: it was a small bedroom where the owner of the Silent Hill Historical Society had lived, above the museum. Not that it mattered so much where he was, as he needed to get _out _of there. Something had happened to Murphy Pendleton while he was on the run, and it had changed him fundamentally. Pendleton was dangerous now, dangerous and delusional. If he thought George was already dead, and thus incapable of being killed, there was no telling what he might do to him.

George tried to dislodge the bar of the headboard he was handcuffed to, but the thing was solid cast iron. He opened the drawer of the nightstand nearby, but there was nothing in there. He kicked the sheets off and felt around the mattress, under the mattress, and as far down behind the headboard as he could. Nothing but ancient dust. Had the owners just abandoned this place suddenly? Or were they on vacation? Would they be coming back?

No, it was stupid to rely on other people, George thought, especially Silent Hill people. He took one more look around the small area he was confined to, but turned up nothing more than the first time. He looked at his good arm regretfully. Would he have to break his wrist to free himself, then? The iron maiden hadn't left any nerve damage, but that arm and shoulder were too torn to move freely without agony. If he broke his opposite wrist, it would leave him crippled on both sides. Even with two good arms, Pendleton had somehow bested him; he wouldn't stand a chance with them both out of commission. On the other hand, his legs were still fine, and a chance to run was more than what he had now.

George took a few very deep breaths, bracing himself. Maybe he was already in so much pain that he wouldn't notice it much. He shut his eyes and lodged his wrist between the iron scroll-work bars of the headboard. He twisted. The pain was noticeable, and then some. Nonetheless, he twisted and twisted until he heard a terrible little _snap!_

George buried his face in one of the dusty pillows to muffle a

scream. Burning hot pain flashed up his entire arm. Reaction tears sprung into his eyes, stinging them, and he choked on the dust. Sneezing, he lifted his face, looking at his limp hand. Shaking, he managed to use his bandaged hand to twist his too-flexible hand out of the handcuff loop. He was free, but he barely appreciated the fact. All he wanted to do was lie down in that dusty bed and sleep, just sleep it all away.

The door opened, and Pendleton came in. He had a bottled water and a package of some food in his hands. His eyes went from the arm George was cradling to the empty handcuffs, and back again.

"Aw, did you hurt yourself, _cupcake_?" he asked. He put the things down on the nearest table. His attitude was nonchalant, but his posture was guarded. "That couldn't have been fun."

"I'm warning you, Pendleton," George said, climbing off the bed. He was still trembling from pain and his face was moist with sweat, tears, dust, and snot, but he stood his ground. "This doesn't have to go any farther. Just let me go."

"You're warning me?" Pendleton echoed, highly amused. "I don't know if you're the toughest or the dumbest asshole I've ever met, but have you seen yourself? What exactly are you going to do?"

"Stay away from me!"

Pendleton loomed on him. For just a second, George saw a glimmer of someone else doubled with Pendleton. He saw him so clearly: cop uniform disheveled over a beer-bloated figure, the belt swinging from one clenched fist, cold blue eyes like icy lake water, a face he had to see all over again every time he looked in the mirror thanks to the damnation of genetics.

His father came up to him and grabbed him. No, no, not his father, of course not. Pendleton. It was only Pendleton. Ration returned, but the fear was rooted in George, coursing through his veins like a second pulse.

'Daddy, don't hit me, daddy, please!'

'Ma? Ma, my arm, my arm, I think he broke it. Ma, look at me!'

The memories clawed at the man's mind, each stab of his migraine bringing a fresh one back in perfect detail. Pendleton had him by the shirt, was shaking him, was yelling something down at him.

"Go to hell," George murmured. "Go to hell, go to hell, go to hell. You just go the fuck to hell, dad!"

"What? Oomph!"

George cracked his head into Pendleton's face. He heard the gratifying crunch of the man's nose breaking, felt blood spurt into his hair. Pendleton released him, stumbling back, and he kicked him in the midsection. Pendleton fell to the floor and George kicked him and kicked him. Then he ran towards the door. Pendleton reached out and grabbed his ankle. George went down, his arms hitting the floor in self-defense. The pain was exquisite.

"I don't think so," Pendleton grunted, pulling him. "You're not getting away from me this time, Sewell. You're not going anywhere! You're _my _prisoner now!"

George writhed as the man grabbed his legs. He disentangled one and kicked Pendleton square in the face. The man cried out in anger and pain. He managed to slip his grasp and get to his feet. Fortunately, the door had been left unlocked. He fumbled it open with his bandaged hand, and ran. He didn't look to see where he was going, he just ran down the stairs, through the small museum, and out of the Historical Society. He found the road and headed down it, not caring where it led, so long as it was away from the mysteriously psychotic Murphy Pendleton.

* * *

><p>George ran through the misty night, struggling to breathe the thick air. His half-tattered shirt let the rain seep into the bandages, chilling the wounds on his arm, making his skin feel cold and wet. He hugged his tortured arms across his chest, shoulders hunched like a beaten dog's, and stalked the empty streets warily. He thought he heard footsteps coming after him a few times, and ducked behind whatever cover he could find until all was silent again.<p>

The town was dead quiet. The houses were all dark, their windows like the eyes of corpses, containing only the dimming memory of life. He heard only his own footsteps, heavy soles crunching dirt, concrete, gravel, and his ragged breathing. Yet the stillness had a living quality to it, as if he were being watched stealthily by things hiding just beyond visibility in the mist. In a wild moment of fear, George almost wished Pendleton would catch up to him, just to have the company.

He turned down a street and the buildings began to get taller, more industrial. Neon lights met his eyes, and he sighed in relief. Life! There was some kind of bar open, and he jogged towards the sound of music and the burble of talk. He recognized the place vaguely as he got close enough to read its sign: _Heaven's Night_. Some kind of ass and tits place, wasn't it? Well, a little female sympathy could be useful tonight.

It was all George could do to shoulder open the bar's door. The lights were dim and low, and the stage lights gave the small barroom a pinkish glow. A pleasant guitar-laced song was filtering through the place from the jukebox, with a strung-out-chic woman's voice crooning over the music. Like everything else in his hated hometown, there was something familiar about the song. He thought it might have been the tune his mother had been humming, and shuddered at the memory of her nightmare image.

There was a small group of men at a table drinking, and a few loners scattered throughout. A woman in a black latex bikini twined around the pole in the center of the stage, but her motions were dispassionate, would have been robotic save for their languidness. Something about the woman's pallor, the way her dark make-up deadened her features, gave George the creeps. There was no sex in her gyrations, and the pink glow of the lights could not liven her skin. Her eyes were circled in black almost to the point of masking them entirely, and her lips were painted the rusty color of dried

bloodstains. He looked away quickly.

"Hey," George said, sitting on a bar stool. He motioned the bartender over. The mature woman just looked at him expressionlessly, not even seeming to notice his bloody bandages or ripped shirt. "Hey, I need to use your phone. It's an emergency."

Someone had turned the music up. The bartender squinted at him.

"What's that?" she asked. "What'll you be having?"

"No, I didn't say I wanted a drink," George said. "I said, I need your phone."

"Patron? Don't stock that here, sorry."

"No, I said, phone!" George said loudly. "I need your phone! There's a maniac after me, a con!"

"No cans," the bartender said, "just the bottled stuff."

"Not can, con!" George shouted, getting annoyed. "There's a convicted criminal after me! Can I use your phone?"

"Phone lines are down," the bartender said. "What was that you wanted again?"

"I didn't want anything!" George exclaimed. "I just need a phone! Do you have a cell or something? A cell, or?"

"Sure thing, hon."

She served him a Miller beer and then went to the other end of the bar. George stared at the drink, unable to believe his bad luck. He blew out a sigh. Well why not? _

Drinking turned out to be harder than expected. In his attempt to grab the glass with his bandaged hand, George forgot about calling for help. Suddenly, because he could not get to it, he wanted that drink more than ever. He groped and fumbled with the glass, sloshing it on his shirt, his arm shaking until he had to put it down again. The struggle was depressing, and, drained of all his adrenaline, he lacked the will to pursue it. Glaring miserably at the glass, the man almost felt like crying.

George leaned his forehead lightly on his better hand and rubbed his forehead. He was so damned tired, and his head was pounding again. When would his head clear? If Pendleton really hadn't drugged him, then what was going on? He didn't feel altogether himself. Something was wrong, something was very, very wrong.

The glass lifted to his lips, and, not thinking, George drank the cold beer. Figuring it was the bartender, he looked up, smiling. He had just thanked his helper, when his eyes fell on Pendleton. The wheat aftertaste of the beer made him feel sick, and his stomach twisted coldly. Pendleton drew up a bar stool beside him and sat down. His nose was taped up and his face was a mess of darkening bruises. Good.

"Did you call for help?" Pendleton asked.

"Phone lines are down."

"Of course they are," Pendleton said. He drank from George's glass. "No one is going to come rescue you. You know that, don't you? No one is going to come here."

"I don't need to be rescued," George said. He pushed the glass back to himself and struggled to lift it. "Don't need anyone. I don't need anyone to help me. I'm going to get out of this fucking town, but not before I kill you, you bastard."

"You can't even lift that glass," Pendleton said. "Exactly how do you intend to kill me, Sewell?"

George shook his head, scowling. Pendleton raised the glass to his mouth, but he turned his face away. With a shrug, Pendleton took a drink himself.

"Bartender!" George shouted. When she came over, he demanded, "Whiskey. And can I get a straw?"

She gave him a look, and he lifted his ruined hands in explanation. The bartender raised her eyebrows, looking between the two battered men. Pendleton smiled, said something about catching up with his old friend after the 'car accident', and slung an arm around George's shoulders. George was too desperate for a drink to stop him, he only ground his teeth and said nothing. The bartender got a knowing look, and brought him the whiskey and straw momentarily, then left the two to their privacy. George put the straw in his mouth and gratefully let the hard liquor dull his senses.

"This is a nightmare," George announced. He motioned for the bartender to refill his glass, and told her to leave the bottle. When she was gone, he continued, "This isn't actually happening. This is all some kind of indigestion-induced dream. It isn't happening. It's just notâ€"ow!"

Pendleton had twisted one of the bruises on his face. The bartender gave them a sharp look, and Pendleton put an arm around his shoulders again. George rubbed his face with the back of his hand, glaring murderously at him.

"You felt that, right?" Pendleton said, keeping his voice down. "Still think it's just a dream?"

"So it's a realistic one, so what?" George shrugged his arm off. "This can't be real. _You _can't be real. What happened to my stupid, naive, simpering cupcake?"

"He finally stopped kidding himself," Pendleton said softly. He drank the rest of George's discarded beer. "You used to tell me that all the time, didn't you? 'Stop kidding yourself, cupcake, you're not a good person', that's what you said. You said it when you were telling me why I deserved it when you looked the other way when that guy jumped me in the shower. You said it when you forced me to go down on you. You said it when I was put in solitary for killing Coleridge. You said it all the damn time, every damn day. Well, I finally took your advice."

George shut his eyes, sucking whiskey down through the straw desperately. All he wanted to do was pass out. He knew he couldn't, that he had to escape Pendleton again, but he chose not to think about that just yet. If the liquor numbed him enough, maybe he could get the energy for another run.

"The last time I saw Carol, I saw the truth in her eyes," Pendleton went on, as if George should care. He refilled the beer glass with whiskey. "All of a sudden, it didn't matter if Anne had forgiven me for her father's deathâ€" "

"Who?"

"Anne Marie Cunningham?" Pendleton said, watching George. "Coleridge's daughter?"

"Didn't know he had one."

"Huh. I would have thought she would have wanted to have words with you, after I told her you killed her father."

"You did what?" George asked angrily. He held his head in one hand and groaned. "Damn it. Do you live to be a pain in my ass, or what, Pendleton?"

"Anyway, I didn't care whether Anne forgave me or not," Pendleton went on, ignoring the question. "It didn't matter, couldn't sustain me, not when I saw the way Carol looked at me. That was when I realized how much I had changed in Silent Hill. It wasn't the bus crash or the people I saw die right in front of me. It wasn't even the monsters, or the guilt, or the pain of losing Charlie all over again in memory. What changed me was the fact that I had been denying until I saw Carol again: that I needed the darkness I found in Silent Hill."

"It's just a town," George muttered.

"I don't know if you believe that or if you just want to believe that, but it's just not true," Pendleton told him. "At least not for us, not now. I've been reading some things in that Historical Society. I know what this place is."

George refilled his glass. The liquor was beginning to give him a buzz, and his headache had lessened. He would have to stop soon before he became incapacitated, though.

"I was terrified when I first ended up here," Pendleton kept talking. "Nothing made sense. Everything was twisted, a nightmare maze of every ugly piece of my life. But fighting it felt good. I wouldn't admit it to myself at the time, but the brutality was exactly what I needed. It was what I wanted, a chance to fight back. No, not just to fight back, that's only half the truth. It was a chance to fight, period. A chance to kill. It was exactly what I felt when I killed Napier, and I got addicted to it. I thought I had left it behind when I escaped the town, but I hadn't. Carol saw it in my eyes when I found her again. God, she was so terrified of me. I still remember her just-just screaming. Screaming at me. She was so scared."

"Was?" George turned his face to Pendleton, interested for the first

time. "What did you do to her?"

"Nothing," Pendleton said, too quickly. There was a hitch at the end of the word that made it sound like more of a question than a statement. "I didn't do anything to Carol. I could never hurt her."

Pendleton didn't sound so certain, but George dropped it for the moment. The last thing he needed was to antagonize his would-be captor just before running from him again.

"I left Carol. She was fine," Pendleton said, more to convince himself than George, it sounded like. "I just left her alone. She can't love me anymore, and I can't blame her for that. I'm a monster. You taught me how to be a monster, this town trained me to be a monster, but in the end, I _chose _it. I chose this. I won't leave this town again. I can't. And neither will you, Sewell."

"I'm going to leave," George said, "and I'm going to go right over your cold, dead body."

"I may not be cold, but I'm already dead."

George watched him, wondering if Pendleton was drunk yet. He shifted on the bar stool, putting his feet on the floor again. Pendleton grabbed his arm.

"You won't make it," he told George. "You can barely even stand. What did you used to tell me? Just relax and take it, cupcake?"

"Yeah. Yeah, you're right." George moved to sit back down. "I did sayâ€"that!"

George used both wrists to lift his glass and splash the alcohol directly into Pendleton's face. The man cried out as the liquor stung the cuts and abrasions, blinding his eyes. George slid down from the stool, unsteady, and burst out of the Heaven's Night bar.

It was still raining outside. _I don't have another run in me, _George thought instantly. His body shook from the cold, and his muscles were rubbery. He took off walking fast, but even that effort nearly made him faint. The town spun and swerved in the damp fog as he stumbled into a dark alley. Hiding was the only chance he had left.

George could hardly see a thing away from the streetlights. The alley smelled like wet concrete and stale piss, despite the rain. Something moved on a rooftop above, and rats scurried away past his shoes. He suddenly walked right into chain-link. Stupefied, he grasped the gate. It was too high to climb in his condition, and the door was padlocked shut. He rattled it uselessly, and shuffled away.

George leaned against the brick wall of a building and slid to sit on the wet ground. His entire body felt like one large wound, and his arms were useless. Maybe he should have stayed chained to that bed, he thought weakly, at least it was warm. But no, no. _He _wasn't a prisoner. He was no one's prisoner.

A bulk moved beside him, and his heart leaped into his throat. He winced back, but then an old man lifted his head. Some homeless bum.

Wonderful. The man's eyes were pale with blindness, and his white hair was matted to his face by the rain.

"Four-and-twenty blackbirds," the old man rasped. "Are you from the nest?"

"Leave me alone, old man," George pleaded. He threw his head back, letting the rain wash down his face. "Just leave me alone."

"The nest! You're from the nest!" the old man insisted. "Sewer, sewing, Sewell. That nest, that nest."

"Wait, what did you say?" George asked. "Do you know me? How do you know me?"

"The nest!"

"Not so loud!"

The man shrieked and laughed wildly. Groaning, George forced himself to his feet. He staggered back towards the street. It was almost a relief when Pendleton appeared in the alley's only exit. George stared up at him, struggling to remain conscious. He noticed that Pendleton had that long black coat on again.

"I'll always find you," Pendleton said softly, stepping towards him. "This entire town is a prison, Sewell. Where exactly do you plan to go?"

"You're crazy."

George's words slurred and he lost his balance. Pendleton caught him before he fell. The embrace was almost intimate. Panic needled at George, but his body would not cooperate with his need to flee.

"Come on," Pendleton said. "Time to go home â€¦ cupcake."

With that, Pendleton stooped and heaved George over his shoulder. George tried to kick at him, but it was such a weak effort that it was more pathetic than anything. Infuriated, he blushed, and hung there haplessly. After a few minutes of watching the ground go by, he closed his eyes, and did not reopen them that night.

4. Chapter 4

****4****

George woke up feeling worse than ever. He tried to sit up, but he was restrained by something. He coughed violently, throat burning. He was no longer cold, but he was now uncomfortably hot. His skin was on fire, especially his arms. He writhed on the bed, trying to blink away the blurry fuzz over his vision.

"Relax. Here."

A glass was held to his mouth, and he drank the water. Even through his questionable vision, he recognized Murphy Pendleton. The man put down the glass of water and pressed a hand to his forehead.

"Let me go," George demanded. He coughed. "You bastard, get away from me."

"If I do that, how am I going to take care of you?"

"Take care of me," scoffed George. "My ass!"

"I am."

"Then why am I tied down?"

"That's for your own protection," Pendleton said. "You kept hurting yourself."

"What? That's a fuckingâ€"I didn'tâ€" "

"You knocked that iron maiden down on yourself, didn't you?"

"Yeah, but only becauseâ€" "

"And you broke your own wrist?"

"I only did those things to get those damned handcuffs off, and you know it," George seethed. The anger made his head hurt, and he lay back with a grimace. "You twisted freak."

"I learned from the best."

"You think this is some game?" George asked hoarsely. "I'm sick, Pendleton."

"Oh yeah, I know."

"I mean, I'm really sick! Physically sick!" George said, frustrated. "I'm gonna die here, Pendleton, no matter what you think. And then what? Can you really live with that?"

"I could, actually. But you're not going to die, Sewell." Pendleton leaned over him, an arm over George's chest. He held a cool damp cloth to the man's burning forehead. "You're not getting away that easy."

George was infuriated by the taunting mock concern on Pendleton's face. When had the man gotten this twisted? He went from acting like a molestation-friendly uncle to treating George the wayâ€"well, the way he had treated Pendleton when their positions were reversed at Ryall State. _I messed with the wrong cupcake, _George thought regretfully. He had overstepped and gotten into some tough situations before, but never before had he misjudged a man this badly.

"At least untie me," George said. "All right? Look at me, I'm not going anywhere."

Pendleton eyed him suspiciously. As if _he _were the ex-con!

"_Please_, " George ground the word out painfully.

"Well, since you asked so politely."

Pendleton ruffled his hair, almost causing George to let an insult slip. He bit his tongue literally and waited. He had been chained with two sets of handcuffs, which were in turn connected to thick steel chains encircling the bed. Pendleton unlocked his wrists and he sat up, rubbing them. Feeling slowly returned to his arms, and when it did, he wished it hadn't.

"Here." Pendleton handed him two white pills and the glass of water. "Aspirin."

"That's it?" grumbled George. He took the medicine regardless. He saw his wrist was splinted and bandaged, and the bandages on his other arm had been changed. He was only in his pants and the sleeveless undershirt he wore under his uniform. The idea of Pendleton removing any of his clothing made his skin crawl ominously.

George saw Pendleton watching him. He seemed eager for George to try something, so that he could stop him. Where had all this sadism come from? Had he really inspired all that in the otherwise average Pendleton?

"How long do you think you can keep this up?" George asked. "Do you really believe you can keep me a prisoner forever? Realistically speaking, how long do you think you can hold me prisoner?"

"We parted ways from reality the moment we crossed into this town."

"Enough with the supernatural crap!" George yelled. "You were in that bar with me! You saw! There are just regular people here! It's just a town! So I'm asking you, Pendleton: how long do you think you can keep me here before someone in this goddamn town starts asking questions?"

Pendleton stood up. He crossed the room and picked up a heavy navy blue coat from a chair. He returned and threw it to George.

"Even if what you're saying would be true, this place is abandoned; no one has been out here for a long time," Pendleton said. "But put that on. I want to show you something before you go on saying Silent Hill is just some normal place."

George stared at him in disbelief. Was Pendleton stupid enough to take him outside? Maybe he really didn't have as much taste for torture as he was pretending to, and secretly wanted George to escape. Either way, George wasn't going to pass up this unexpected opportunity. He climbed out of bed and slipped into the coat. Just as they got to the door, however, he felt the familiar metal bracelet encircle his unbroken wrist. Pendleton smiled at him, and snapped the other end of the handcuff around his own arm.

"If anyone sees us, they're going to get ideas," he said, "but it beats the hell out of chasing you all over town again."

"Asshole," George muttered in disappointment.

Thus chained awkwardly together, they left the Silent Hill Historical Society. Outside, it was overcast and foggy as always. There was not a soul to be seen anywhere. Pendleton jerked on the handcuffs and led

them down the street.

"This area wasn't so dead when I was a kid," George said, more to himself than to Pendleton. "Wonder what happened?"

"Someone recently told me this town is like a living organism," Pendleton said. "Districts sprout up, wither, die, and then new ones take their place. There are maps made all the time, but no two maps ever seem to match up."

"My ma used to say crazy shit like that," George said. He realized the juvenile moniker he had used and coughed. "I mean, my mother."

"And you never believed her?"

"No, why would I? She was quiet about it, but deep down she was a raving lunatic," George sneered. "Just like everyone else in that damned Order."

"Is there anyone or anything that you do respect, Sewell?"

"Yeah, me," George said. "I got out of Silent Hill. I built a life for myself at Ryall. I respect my own power and what I've done, that's it."

"Yeah, and look where all that's gotten you."

"This is just a temporary setback. I've had them before," George said. "I'll still be looking down at your grave sooner or later, cupcake."

George used the handcuffs linking them to swing Pendleton's hand back and forth. He whistled the melody to "Born Free" as they walked down the empty road. Pendleton just stared at him.

"If you weren't such an ass, I'd feel sorry for you," he finally said. "You really have no idea."

George ignored him. He was outside, and he was damned if he was going back inside with Murphy Pendleton. Escape was imminent, he knew it. Despite his physical ailments, he was in a good mood.

"You have no one to go back to, do you?"

George ignored the random question.

"You haven't once named anyone that would be looking for you," Pendleton went on. "Your entire life really was that prison, wasn't it?"

George interrupted his whistling long enough to say, "Still is."

"You probably never even met anyone outside that place," Pendleton said. "You were always trading sexual favors on the inside. I heard a young guy killed himself because of the things you made him do."

"He just couldn't live with having enjoyed it," George said. "Trust me. I know."

"Yeah, you know everything, don't you?" Pendleton said, riled. "You fucking smartass."

"Whoa. Did you used to kiss your son goodnight with that mouth?"

"Don't you talk about my son, Sewell."

George grinned, knowing he had hit a nerve. If they fought, Pendleton would have to uncuff them eventually. All he needed was a second of freedom, and he could get away.

"You know, I'm beginning to wonder about you and little Charlie," George said. "You sure have a short temper, Pendleton. You ever lose it with him?"

"No," Pendleton said tightly. "_Never_."

"You sure?" George needled him. "You never shouted at him, saw that fear you keep talking about in his eyes? Never grabbed him up off the floor too roughly in the middle of a tantrum? Never gave him a few spanks too many?"

"I never hit my son, Sewell."

"That's too bad, it might have prepared him a little for the end," George said. He felt the hand cuffed next to his tighten into a fist, and Pendleton's jaw was working in tension. "Yeah, I saw the autopsy report. The contusions on his face. Napier hit him, right? Must have been a hell of a shock if no one had ever even given him a spanking before."

"I said, don't you _ever_—" Pendleton pulled the man close by the hand and punched him in the face. "—_ever_ talk about my son!"

Pendleton punched him in the stomach, bringing George to his knees. His one hand, cuffed to Pendleton's, remained hanging limply from Pendleton's wrist. He coughed hard, but Pendleton did not relent. He felt his foot connect with his side, cracking a rib. There was no getting away, they were still bound together. The man kicked his side several times, until he cried out.

"This is what you wanted, right?" Pendleton spat down at him. He unlocked the handcuffs as George coughed and gasped beneath his feet. "You think you're going to get away? You're never getting away, Sewell! You want to see why? Do you?"

Pendleton grabbed him by the hair and the back of his belt and lifted him to his feet. He dragged him painfully down the road, until it simply—"ended. George reeled back, but Pendleton held him right at the end of the concrete, over a gaping chasm. The road seemed to have been lifted off the face of the earth, cracked right in half on the town's borderline. As far as the eye could see, the town ended in a steep, bottomless cliff.

"Do you see? Do you?" Pendleton asked. He forced George onto his knees, right at the edge of the cliff. "Still think we're just two guys who just happened to wake up in a normal town?"

"This isâ€"it has to be the earthquakes," George said roughly. He licked his dry lips, breathing hard. His eyes were transfixed by the nothingness below. "Gotta be. It's gotta be."

"It's like this all the way around the town," Pendleton told him. He pushed the man further towards the chasm, though he struggled fitfully. "There's no damage to any other town. It's just Silent Hill, completely cut off from the rest of the world."

Rubble fell down into the chasm. They never heard it land. George felt a dash of terror unlike any he had previously experienced. He had always liked the confines of his prison because it was a regimented micro-society of rules and order, and he had been on the right side of the power struggle. But this? This was claustrophobic chaos. This was being at the mercy of whoever and whatever was trapped in the town with them, without hope of escape. This was hell.

The iron gray sky broke into rain. The icy fingers pricked his scalp, bringing him from a feverish warmth to a frigid chill. Pendleton nudged his bottom with his foot, nearly pushing him over the edge.

"All right, all right!" George cried desperately. He fought against Pendleton's grip on his hair. "I get it, all right? I'm sorry, justâ€"just get me away from here!"

Pendleton threw him back onto the safety of the unbroken road. George scrabbled back further, eyeing the cliff in fear. The vertigo rippled through him, and he turned onto hand and knee to retch. There was nothing in his stomach, so he coughed up only thin streams of bile.

"I'm sorry I said that about your boy," George said. He struggled to his feet, and was surprised when Pendleton gave him a hand up. He did his best to look contrite. "That was shitty of me."

"Yeah. It was."

"I don't know about this," George said, approaching the cliff cautiously. He peered down. "I still think it must be because of the earthquakes or something. But if something weird is going on, I'm not surprised. Maâ€"My mother always said there was magic here. Either way, I guess I'm stuck here with you, huh, cupcake?"

"Yeah."

"Yeah. Only â€| Only I'm not."

It was an act of sheer desperation, but George knew that desperate men were capable of extraordinary feats. He threw all his strength into his least-injured arm, and gave Pendleton a mighty shove. Pendleton seized his arm in alarm, slipping to the brink of the cliff. George kicked him with all his strength, almost going flying over the cliff himself, and felt the man falling backwards. The coat dragged him along, and he slipped out of it with the quickness of an eel.

Pendleton tried to put a foot back to get his balance, but the road

had run out. His foot fell into nothing, and the rest of him followed. He gaped at George in shock, and then fell back over the edge with a horrified scream.

"So long, cupcake!" George called after him. "Guess I ended up standing over your grave sooner rather than later, huh?"

The scream dwindled and faded. All was quiet save for the pouring rain. George laughed until his side hurt, and then fell down onto the ground. Without the coat, he was freezing in the wife-beater tank, and his bandages were soaked through. He could barely walk without feeling a jab of pain in his midsection, and he knew a rib or two were smashed. He needed a hospital badly, but there was no one to be seen or heard.

"Aw shit," George groaned, getting to his feet. He started the long walk back up the road wearily. "Shit, shit, shit."

_I have to admit, I'll miss him, _he thought. With the luxury of freedom, he could afford to feel a grudging admiration for Pendleton's recent toughness. It was also a shame that he would never know exactly how Pendleton had become this 'Bogeyman', as he called it: so vengeful and violent. They had only been together a single day, and George was battered from head to foot. He had not been so beaten and degraded since he was a child.

"You were interesting guy, if anything, cupcake," George muttered. "One hell of an interesting guy, after all."

* * *

><p>Limping and dragging himself, George managed to make it back to the Heaven's Night. It was mostly empty, save for a few early morning drunks and a different bartender. Funnily enough, this bartender looked like the crazy homeless man he had met last night, but his eyes were not blind.<p>

"I need help," George said. He went to sit on a bar stool, missed, and clattered to the floor. He tried to get up, but could not. "Some help over here?"

"Good Lord," the bartender said. He came around the bar and knelt down before George, calling to someone to radio the hospital. He helped George sit up against the bottom of the bar, and then took a second look at his face. "Well, how about that? Back in the nest, are you, George?"

"What the fuck did you say?" George asked, thinking he was hearing things. "What?"

"I remember you," the bartender explained. For a minute George thought he _was _the homeless man, but then he elaborated; "George Sewell. You're Lotta and Owen's kid, aren't you?"

"Oh. Oh, yeah. Yeah, that's me."

"Come back to the nest, blackbird?"

"What?"

"You've come home."

"Just for a minute." George's eyes began to flicker closed. "I'm just passing through."

"No, I don't think so, George. Not this time."

George thought the man said those words, but why would he? He really was hearing things, he figured. His eyes shut and he could not open them. His body was incredibly heavy, even his eyelids were too much weight to bear.

Really did a number on me, cupcake, he thought at Pendleton's departed spirit. I knew we were two of a kind Too bad it took you so long to realize it Yeah, it's a damn shame. Could have all turned out differently if you had just appreciated me cupcake _

5. Chapter 5

****5****

George Sewell woke up in a dowdy but clean room at Alchemilla Hospital. He was told by a plain blond nurse that Silent Hill was in the middle of a blackout, and the hospital's electricity all came from emergency generators. There was no cellphone reception, and the phone lines were all down. The isolation disturbed George, but he was too tired to do anything about it.

For two weeks, George concentrated solely on recovering. The injuries turned out not to be as severe as they had felt, and he healed unusually quickly. He spent most of his time eating and sleeping. Outside, thundershowers raged on and off intermittently. Nameless, faceless nurses came and went, dispassionately taking care of him. Fortunately, no one bothered him with questions or conversation. George was sullen from the treatment Pendleton had given him, and in no mood to make friends.

Finally, George recovered enough to be released. The problem was, the town was still cut off, and he had nowhere to go to. He kept this fact to himself out of pride, while he sat in his hospital gown pondering how to solve it. He didn't like institutions where he had no power, they made him feel small and unimportant.

"Excuse me?"

George looked up and was surprised to see the elderly gentleman that tended the Heaven's Night bar by day. He had a large plastic bag in one hand. George nodded to him, and he came up to him, handing him the bag.

"I thought you might need some clothing," the bartender said. "The nurses told me you came in here with nothing adequate for this weather."

"My uniform," mumbled George.

"Lost, I'm afraid."

George swallowed hard at the loss. That uniform was the last symbol of his job that he had had. He was nothing without that job. He hated to be taking charity from this old man, but what choice did he have? It was either take the clothes or leave the hospital naked.

"Thanks, but why are you doing this?" George asked. "You don't know me."

"I saw you around when you were a boy," the old bartender said. "I was a friend of your mother's."

"Oh." _Another Order loony. Great._

George climbed off the hospital bed and went into the bathroom to dress. He heard the old man walk up outside the door. He hoped he wasn't planning to stalk him or anything weird like that.

"You've forgotten, haven't you?"

"Forgotten what?" George asked, hardly caring about the answer. He stepped into black jeans and was relieved that they fit. Still, he itched at the thought of the old man picking out the outfit for him. He must have gotten a good look at him to have so accurately guessed his size.

"That we take care of our own in Silent Hill," the old man said through the door. "There was nothing I would not have done to help your mother—or you, for that matter."

"Yeah, well, I never needed help," George said. He buttoned a crisp black shirt that felt expensive. The dark clothing brought out his black hair and eyes sharply. "I handle my own business, always did."

"Pride is a sin, you know."

"Yeah, well, so is being a mooch."

Nonetheless, George admired himself in the outfit that had been given to him. The bruises and swelling on his face had healed, and he thought he looked quite good. He found black leather gloves in the bag and smirked. _He even got me a pair of gloves, _he thought. Cynically, he mentally added, _Bless._

"Thanks, though," George said as he exited the bathroom. "For the clothes. I'll pay you back when I can."

"Think nothing of it," the old man said. "Consider it a favor—if not to you, then to your dearly departed mother."

"Er, right."

"Do you need a ride?"

"A ride?" George licked his lips, turning to the window. Rain was sheeting down the window, and he heard the rumble of thunder. He hated to admit it, but he had only one place to go. "Yeah. Yeah, I guess I could use a ride."

"Where to?"

"You were a friend of ma's, right? You remember where we lived?" George said, the words thick on his tongue. "The-the Blue Creek Apartments? I, uh, I never sold the apartment, so I guess it's still there. Still mine, I mean. I don't have anywhere else to go. While the roads are out, I mean."

"Of course," the old man said. He beckoned to George as if he were a small boy. "Come. We'll get you home."

"Yeah," George said in defeat. "Yeah, right, home."

* * *

><p>George said nothing during the ride over, and the old man respected his silence. Atmospheric rock music played on the radio, without vocals. George stared out the window, hating himself for recognizing every single street they passed. The car parked in front of a tall apartment building, shabby and plain. Most of the windows were dark, but a few flickered with candlelight. Nothing appeared to have changed from the summers George had spent lounging, hot and angry, by the pool in the courtyard, or sitting bored on the building's front steps.<p>

George clicked the car door open, but a hand fell on his arm. He turned to the old man. In the dim light, his blue eyes looked more pale, almost blind.

"Just a minute," he said. He unhooked a key from his keyring and handed it over. "You'll need this. I got a copy from the superintendent when I saw you back in town. Figured you might not have your own, after all this time."

"Oh yeah." George took the key into one gloved hand. It felt heavier than it should have. "Thanks."

"Anything you need, George." The old man's grip on his arm tightened. "I mean it. Anything. Just come to the Heaven's Night if you need anything. All right?"

"Sure."

Those light eyes bore into George's. He hated blue eyes, they always reminded him of his father. He was beginning to think the old guy was going to proposition him or something, but then he let his arm go. George turned to exit the car so fast he hit the door. He fumbled it open and rushed out into the rain. He hadn't noticed any odors in the car, but he breathed more easily outside it. He glanced back at the car, but the interior light had gone out, shrouding the inside in darkness. He could only see a vague outline of the man. He waited a minute, but the car did not start again. Wondering why the old man was still watching him, he turned and headed for the apartment building.

The front door rattled open, and he shut it behind himself. A flash of lightning illuminated the lobby for a moment, then left the impression burned into his retinas. The small lobby was as he always remembered it: cheap carpet and bad wallpaper, cracked wood wainscoting. It smelled like rotting wood and pine cleaner. The front desk was empty.

George was stricken with an irrational wave of panic so strong that he nearly opened the doors and left. He kept his back to the lobby, clutching the doorknob in both hands, hyperventilating from emotion. He had seen ghosts in his mind: his mother leading him in by the hand, a grocery bag in the other; his father yanking him inside by the scruff of his neck; shouting at some older boys in a fight; kicking the neighbor's yappy little dog. He heard thumps upstairs, and thought of all the times he had gone running up and down the hallway outside his door.

"It's too much," the man murmured. He slid down to the floor, holding his head in both hands. There was no pain, but his brain was tense with his recollections. "It's just too much. I'm not supposed to be here."

A boom of thunder brought him back to himself. _Get a grip, George, get a fucking grip, _he told himself, getting to his feet. His eyes adjusted to the darkness, and he saw that it was just an ugly lobby in an ugly building. There was nothing to fear here, not anymore. He plowed down the hall, and then took the steps quicklyâ€”_thump thump thump_.

The apartment was on the second floor, Room 208. He slowed his walk, approaching it as one would a rattling snake. He tried the doorknob, and then used the key. The door opened, squeaking on rusty hinges, and he ducked in before he could change his mind.

It still smelled like home. He smelled mold and rot, but he also smelled the fragrance of _home_. It was a combination of beer, crayons, home-cooking, and that perfume of White Claudia. His head whirled until he felt drunken. He staggered into the apartment, running a hand over the familiar curves of the worn wood furniture, the sagging cushions of the sofa. Even in the dark, he knew those faded curtains were still a little blue, with tiny floral embroidery. He knew the deep brown tone of his father's leather armchair. He knew that metal robot discarded in the corner had once been a shiny silver color that had fascinated him. He knew every detail of the room. Funny, he had not pictured the place once since he had left Silent Hill, but now he knew it all by heart.

_ 'Read your history, George. History is important.' _

_ 'Get outta here, kid, go on. I got a case to work on.' _

_ 'Why do you have to cause so much trouble?' _

_ 'â€”anything good about you?' _

_ 'Why are youâ€”' _

_ 'Why do youâ€”' _

_ 'Your father will be home soon.' _

George shuddered, pacing the room. He could hear the voices so clearly. Something rattled and he whipped around. Silence again.

_ 'Your father should be getting home soon.' _

"Yeah? Think so? Well, he ain't getting home!" George snapped at the memories. "Dad's never coming home again, all right? I made sure of that. He's never coming homeâ€"

Were those footsteps outside?

"â€"never coming home again."

George's voice faltered. Someone was coming up the stairs outside. He listened intently, his heart racing. It made no sense, but he felt that the footsteps were meant for him, they were coming for him. They paused at the top of the stairs, then continued. His knees buckled and he fell to the floor.

'Your fatherâ€'

The footsteps thudded heavily down the hall, closer and closer. Lightning flashed, momentarily blinding him. He tried to break himself out of his fear, but he was frozen with it, every muscle in his body rigid.

'â€"getting home soon.'

The footsteps methodically plodded down the hall. Then they stopped outside Room 208. A moment, and then the doorknob rattled. George groaned in terror, and crawled backwards. Had he locked the door again? Had he? Had he?

The doorknob gave an unnatural creak, and then the door opened. George didn't want to see who was there. He didn't want to see anything. He wanted to disappear into blind darkness. Maybe if he couldn't see whatever it was, it wouldn't be able to see him.

Lightning flashed, and then he saw it. It was the same figure he had seen when he first awoke in Silent Hill: the Bogeyman. The apparition wore the same long black coat, gloves, and gas mask that Murphy Pendleton had worn. But Pendleton was dead, and who was dressed like this now? George knew in his heart that if he took that mask off, there would be nothing under it. Or, worse, he would remove the mask, and find his father's cold blue eyes glaring down at him.

"No, no, no, no, no!" George crawled backwards as the thing came towards him. "Aw, no, no, stay away from me. Get the fuck away!"

The thing moved quickly towards him. He grabbed around in the dark for a weapon, but his fingers closed around thin air. He was yanked up from the floor, struggling futilely. He kicked and fought, but then something cracked across his head, and all was blackness.

* * *

><p>He came to in a cold metallic darkness. His arms were chained above his head, and he was entirely naked. His head hurt again, and he felt a sticky trickle of drying blood running down the side of his face. He heard rain hitting the ground outside, and the sound came from above: they were underground. He heard shuffling footsteps, and the gas mask-wearing figure came into view.<p>

"What do you want?" George asked, trying to keep his fears rational. "Did you know my family? You know something about me? What? Why are you doing this? Who are you?"

The figure said nothing. It turned and picked something up. When it faced him again, George saw it was an all-too-familiar leather belt. His stomach twisted.

"That you in there, dad?" he asked angrily. "You just, ha, you just have to have the last word, don't you? Well, go ahead. Do it. Just get it over wâ€"ahh!"

The belt cracked across his face, leaving a painful welter on his cheek. He struggled against the chains, but it was hopeless. The figure moved beside him, close enough for him to smell the rain drying on that leather coat, to hear the breathing beneath the mask. Did ghosts breathe?

The belt whipped across his back, leaving a strip of fire from his shoulders to the center of his spine. He remembered this pain as well as he remembered his old apartment. No, the pain was a clearer memory. The pain was not a part of his childhood, the pain was his childhood. The belt licked his back again, and his mouth tightened into a grim line. He bowed his head, knowing he had no choice but to take it.

* * *

><p>George felt like nothing but a slab of hanging meat. He felt the hot streaks of blood running up and down his back, smelled it in the cool air. Most of his weight hung on his chained wrists, and his hands were numb. Raised welts burned and bled across his backside, his chest, down his thighs. He was woozy with pain, but for once his mind refused to lose consciousness. So he hung there, as the less frequent whacks lit the basement with gunshot-like noise, and poured more blazing pain into his skin.<p>

The gas mask-wearing figure had not spoken a single word throughout it all. He had come simply to punish him, and that was what he did. It was his father, George was certain of that. Cupcake had been right after all: he was dead, and he was in hell.

The beating had stopped at some point. The figure came around in front of him, empty-handed. George looked up at him, too stunned from the aches to feel anything. One gloved hand shot out, and he winced back from it. However, he was not struck. The masked figure gripped the side of his face, oddly gentle.

"No, don't do that," George said heavily, turning his face away. "You nâ€"You never comforted me back then. Why would you do that now? No. No, don't touch me! Don't touch me!"

The hand caressed the side of his face. Then, the other hand reached back, and removed the gas mask. George flinched. As it turned out, however, there was a face beneath the mask, and it was not his father's.

"Pendleton!" George exclaimed in shocked horror. He writhed against the chains. "No, no. No! You're dead! I killed you!"

"Didn't kill me dead enough, obviously," Murphy Pendleton said. His brown hair was matted to his face with sweat from the effort of beating his captive, and his eyes were very hard. Nonetheless, he stroked George's face and neck absently.

"No, I killed you!" George protested. His mind began to throb strangely, as if it might break apart at any moment. "I saw you fall!"

"Yeah, well, gravity has its own agenda in Silent Hill," Pendleton said. He smiled. "Aren't you happy to see me, cupcake?"

"No," George whispered, shaking his head. "No. No."

Pendleton patted his face patronizingly and left him to his splintering reality. He unchained him, catching him as he collapsed. George tried to push away from the dead man, but he could barely move for the soreness.

"Did I break you?" Pendleton asked. He sounded like a child curiously examining an insect being put on a slide. His hand brushed George's black hair back from his face. "Did I? Did I finally break you, Sewell?"

George turned his face in exhausted disgust. The tears that leaked from his eyes said it all. Pendleton held him closer, obscenely tight. He murmured "good", and his hands pressed against George's bare, battered flesh. He brought his face close, and crushed their mouths together. There was no love in the kiss, it was a devouring, spiteful, ugly gesture. George fought against it, finally pushing his way out of the man's arms. He dizzily stumbled away from him, and soon fell to the concrete basement floor. His palms and knees were skinned, and he could not get up again. Pendleton was soon at his side, an arm around him again.

"Please," George begged. He recognized the aggressive lust in Pendleton's touch, knew the arousal by violence the man was hot with. "Please, stop."

"I've waited so long just to hear you beg," Pendleton said. He kissed George again, nearly biting his lip off as he tore away. "I came back here, and I knew why the moment I found you on that beach. I knew what I came here for. It was to break you, Sewell. That's what I've really been living for since I escaped: the chance to break you down piece by piece, strip away your humanity one trauma at a time, just like you did to me."

"You're sick. You're sick!"

"Oh, I know," Pendleton said in a shushing, comforting tone. He pulled George closer, stroking his hair. "I know. We're both sick, we're both hopelessly sick. That's why we're here, isn't it? Why we're here together?"

Pendleton kissed him again, bruising his mouth. Then he pulled him over and held him down on his knees. That was when George's mind retreated into itself, shutting his emotions off like a switch. Though his mind protected itself, his body felt everything.

* * *

><p>George lay on the hard concrete, wondering when he would finally pass out. His body twitched and sporadically shook, hurting both inside and out. He felt raw and dirty. The air smelled like blood, semen, and sweat. Beneath that, he smelled the perpetual odor of rot and rain. He focused on the patter of the rain outside, the grumble of thunder, hoping that would lull him to sleep. He had never been afraid of thunderstorms.<p>

Something fell on top of him, warming him slightly. It was the long black coat. Pendleton wrapped it around him, and then jerked him to his feet roughly. George blankly let himself be pulled along, hardly seeing the apartment building's boiler room as he went. Instead, he imagined the eyes of the Ryall prisoners watching him, leering at him, laughing his disgrace. He shook his head, trying to still the mocking voices ringing in his ears. No, no one was watching from the shadows, no one but the rats, anyway.

They returned to Room 208. George tried to veer away, but Pendleton was not done with him yet. He shoved him into the bathroom.

"You remember the showers, right?" Pendleton said. He turned on the faucet in the small tiled shower. The water ran dark, then red, and finally cleared. It hissed in a sinister way, splattering the dirty, chipped white tiles. "You were always there for shower time, weren't you?"

The coat was pulled away, and George was shoved into the running water. It stung the cuts on his body, the spray too hot and too forceful. He spluttered and gasped as he was turned to face the wall and held there. There must have still been soap somewhere, because he felt it burning the cuts. He lost awareness, but still, cruelly, did not pass out entirely.

The water shut off, and he was dragged along, dead on his feet. A door was kicked open.

"Well, how about this?" Pendleton said, pushing George inside. "They told me you used to live here. Was this your room?"

Pendleton knelt beside where George had fallen. He lifted his head up by the hair. George looked up tiredly, and his insides turned to water. It was his old room, in fact: the same dingy striped blue and white wallpaper, the dent in the wall where he had thrown a ball too many times and too hard at it, the ceiling he had lain and stared at in misery for so many hours, the window overlooking the street he used to watch when the TV was broken.

"This was it, huh?" Pendleton said. He released the man's hair. "This was where your parents raised their little monster?"

George fell into the scratchy blue carpet and curled into a ball. He covered his head with his arms. Perhaps Pendleton would forget about him if he just stayed there. A hand nudging his shoulder let him know this was not the case.

"They did quite a job, didn't they?" Pendleton mused. "Your parents? You're a real prize, Sewell."

"You don't know anything about me," George said hoarsely. He held his

head tightly. "Just go away, Pendleton. Just leave me alone. Isn't it enough?"

"It won't ever be enough," Pendleton said. He actually laughed, shaking the man by the shoulder. "It's just too much fun. Now I see why you kept on tormenting me, the other prisoners â€¦ It's a rush, huh? Watching all those layers of strength, real strength and bravado both, just melt away. I mean, _look _at you, Sewell."

Pendleton hit George's arms away from his head and lifted his face to his own.

"Look at you," Pendleton repeated. He lifted the man to his feet and pulled him over to his old dresser mirror. He wiped the dust away with his sleeve impatiently, and forced him to look at their reflection. "You look so much better with all that smug self-satisfaction wiped off that face. You almost look human with all that shame and self-loathing."

George didn't think he looked like any kind of human, though he kept that opinion to himself. He could not meet his own eyes in the mirror, and inwardly flinched at the sight of the garish bruises covering his chest, shoulders, and the split-open welt on his cheek. He looked smaller without any clothes, a little thinner. He was reminded of the scrawny kid he had been, the kid whose every victory was counted as nothing more than freak luck. He looked at himself and was filled with loathing. After a minute, he had to look away.

"And you?" George asked. He coughed, cleared his throat, and looked up at Pendleton. "What do you see in the mirror â€¦| cupcake?"

Pendleton looked amazed. For a moment, his sadistic confidence wavered, but only for a moment. He laughed, shaking George's face by the chin.

"You're a feisty one, aren't you?" He slapped the side of George's face, not too hard. "You just don't know when to shut up."

"Why not?" George murmured. "Why not? All you can do is hit me. So go ahead. Hit me."

Pendleton said nothing.

"Don't get shy on me now, cupcake."

"Great. You're delirious. Just what I need," muttered Pendleton.

Pendleton pulled him over to the bed and threw him there. The covers smelled too clean for having been left there for years, too much like the fabric softener his mother used to use. Nonetheless, he crawled under them, though the fabric irritated his wounds.

"All these years, and I'm right back here," George murmured, not realizing he was speaking out loud. He hid his face in the pillow, overwhelmed with the urge to cry. "I never got anywhere."

"No, you did," Pendleton said. His fingers ruffled into George's hair. "You got all the way to Ryall. The thing is, you aren't there

anymore. You're not a big fish in a little pond, are you? Huh? No. No, you're just a small man in a small town."

"Less than a man," muttered George. He broke down sobbing. The resultant shudders made every inch of his body hurt. "Oh God."

Murphy Pendleton stared down at the broken man in his childhood bed for a long, long time. He could not deny how good it had felt to hurt him. Even as he stood over him stroking his arm, his fingers tended to dig into the welts, and he was satisfied to see the small flinches this caused. Every mark on the man was a moment of degradation he had caused him, every drop of blood was one of the millions of seconds of humiliation he had caused him, every tear repayment for all the hours Murphy had spent contemplating killing himself to escape Sewell.

Murphy sat on the edge of the bed. Sewell turned his face more deeply into the pillow, futilely trying to hide his tears from view. Murphy had seen his face in nightmares, that same face that was flushed and soft with defeat now. How many times had he been on his knees looking up at that face? He turned the man's face upwards again, but there was no trace of his nightmare monster in that face anymore. It was just a man's face like any other now. He was only a man. Murphy was inexplicably disappointed by that realization.

Murphy's gaze wandered around the bedroom. Sewell must have left home fairly early; the room had not matured beyond adolescence. He fought against it, but eventually Murphy began to remember Charlie. The little plastic dinosaurs in that box there, and the toy cars, those all could have belonged to his own son.

_This man was someone's little boy once, _Murphy thought, looking down at Sewell. _From the things he's said in passing, I don't think his parents were very good to him. Still, I don't think they'd want this for their child. It's one thing to be a shitty parent, it's another to â€¦ to think of your only son, your little boy, being â€¦ hurt and â€¦ scared and alone â€¦ I don't think any parent, even this guy's, could bear the idea of their child being beaten and indescribably violated â€¦ by â€¦ by the Bogeyman â€¦ _

Murphy glanced across the room and saw himself in the mirror. Though he was not wearing the coat or gas mask, he still saw the masked monster. He still saw the Bogeyman in his place. _I told Charlie that I wasn't the Bogeyman, _Murphy thought, _and he said â€¦ 'not yet'. _

—

Murphy looked away from the mirror, back at Sewell. The man looked pathetic now, but he was a rapist, a drug trafficker, a bully, a thief, and a cold-blooded murderer. He deserved everything Murphy had done to him, and more. Murphy had just given him the punishment he deserved, a taste of his own medicine. So why did he feel no better than Napier for it?

_I wish he would mouth off again, _Murphy thought. He nudged Sewell, but the man had fallen into a fitful sleep. _Aw, hell._

Murphy sat on the bed beside him for uncounted hours, thinking of everything and nothing. The storm went on raging outside. He waited for Sewell to wake up, but he never did, leaving him alone to the

mewling remnants of his conscience.

6. Chapter 6

****6****

George Sewell awoke beneath the window beside his bed, to a view of a dead white sky. He shut his eyes, trying to cling to unconsciousness. He passed out again, but came to some time later. This time, he could not return to the bliss of sleep. Slowly, he became aware of his body, and all its woes.

_Dad must have been on a real bender last night, _George thought, displaced in time. _I wonder what I did? I don't even remember._

He managed to very slowly roll onto his other side, although it did nothing to ease the pain. Then he saw the man sleeping on the blue rolling chair in front of his desk. Murphy Pendleton. George realized that he was not a child, and that it had not been his father's hand that he had suffered under. He tried to summon up hatred for the man, but he was too tired. He turned his face from the man, and sank thankfully back into sleep.

He woke up feeling nothing. His body was numb, and the room was dark. The window was open, and a chill rain was blowing in through the inadequate white curtains. George shivered, moving away from it. He rolled, and fell clear off the bed. It should have hurt, but it didn't. It didn't feel like anything.

He left his bedroom, throwing the door shut behind him. It shut with a metallic clang, and he turned in alarm. Everything was rusted metal, and his bedroom door was a prison cell's barred gate now. His bare feet scraped across grating, and he saw overgrown larvae squirming beneath him. Everything smelled sickeningly of White Claudia, and death. From the direction of the kitchen, he heard his mother humming.

"Hey, ma, what happened to this place?" George called, covering his fear with annoyance. He kicked at the corner as he turned it, and rust flaked off. Behind the metal and splinters of wainscoting, there was a raw layer of something that resembled skinless flesh. "You really let the place go while I was gone, huh? Well, you always did pay more attention to that damned museum than to your own fucking home."

He saw his mother standing with her back to him, as always, in front of the stove. Raw meat was chopped on the butcher's block on the counter, blood running down and dripping audibly onto the kitchen tiles. He approached her warily, remembering how she had looked at the Historical Society. She went on humming. Infuriated by her lack of attention, George came over and turned her by the shoulder.

To his relief, she had her face. George stared at her: the eyes so dark they looked black, like his own, and the delicate, thin face, worn around the eyes and severe around the mouth. He was surprised to be looking down at her, as she had always been a tall woman, taller than he was during most of his life. She looked up at him, with her usual misty look in eyes that seemed to gaze just above his shoulder rather than meet his gaze.

"Ma, they hurt me again," George said. He shook her gently. "Don't you even care?"

She went on humming. He shook her harder. She only turned back to the stove. Something bloody was sizzling on the fire. It smelled rank.

"Can't you even look at me?" the man asked angrily. "Goddamn it, look at me!"

George snatched the pan off the fire and threw it across the room. It hit the sofa and the fabric caught on fire. Smoke billowed out at them, acrid and thick. His mother looked at him, but there was only mild pity on her face.

"Don't you care?" he asked again. "Don't you?"

There was a thumping sound out in the hallway. It chilled George's blood. He released his mother, who cocked her head towards the front door.

"Your father will be home soon," she said. She walked around her son. "I'm going downstairs, down to do the laundry."

George watched her go, the rejection tearing away at him inside. He turned to the kitchen counters and punched them, swearing. His fist slipped on the blood from the meat, and it sprayed at him. Outside, the thumping footsteps grew closer.

"No, no, you can't hurt me anymore," George said. The footsteps stopped behind him, and he whipped around defiantly. "You can't!"

George lost his nerve when he saw not the masked nightmare, but his actual father. He was taller than George had ever grown, heavier, but they had the same exact face. They shared the thin sharp face, the cruel thin lips, everything but the eyes: his father's eyes were light blue, the coldest blue George had ever seen. Looking into those eyes, he turned to mush inside.

Then the hands laid on him, and he fought in desperate rebellion. He had won against this man once. It had only been the one time, but it had been all he had needed. He could do it again, he told himself. He could win again, just one more time, put the man down once and for all.

George's hand closed on something metal. A pan. He swung at his father, but the blow had no effect whatsoever. The man's face was a mask of hatred, the same expression he had last looked at George with. He opened his mouth to growl at his son, and the jaw came unhinged. George remembered the crack that had split the jaw from its hinges very clearly. He hit at the man, but nothing fazed him. He grabbed George and pushed him down onto the stove. The smell of burning flesh suffocated him as his back was seared by the gas range fires. Those evil blue eyes looked mirthfully down at him, and he screamed.

* * *

><p>"Hey, hey, hey! Wake up! Hey, Jesus, stop screaming!"<p>

George recognized the voice instantly, and it threw cold water on his panic. Murphy Pendleton had him by the shoulders, was shaking him awake. He hit him off angrily. His heart was still racing, and the smell of burning meat was still in his nose. He sank back down onto his mattress, head bowed between his shoulders. He rubbed the back of his neck, carefully avoiding the raised lumps just beneath the base of his head. His back was not burning, but it was a welter of bruises and gashes. He looked up at Pendleton. The man looked at his back, where the quilt had slipped off, and then looked away. There was no shame in his eyes, but there wasâ€"what? Pendleton seemed awkward with his new role of monster, as if he were unable to fully slip into it without the coat and gas mask. He lingered for a moment, and then left the bedroom.

George noticed that he left the door open. It didn't really matter, he was in no shape to run. Anyway, Pendleton had said he would always find him, and he had made good on his word. _He returned from the bottom of a bottomless pit just for me, _George thought. _He's never going to let me go._

George shuddered, rolling over painfully. What was Murphy Pendleton? What had he become? Was he right, were they were both dead? Or had he become some kind of monster all on his own? _Was it _the town? Had his batty mother been right about everything? That would mean that the God the Order worshiped was more than a pathetic delusion of pitiful cultists; it would mean that their God was real; it would mean their God _was _God. The thought that there was any sort of deity overseeing this sick world made George's blood run cold.

_'Pain is good for you, George,' _his mother had told him a very long time ago. It had been after one of his first bad beatings, though he couldn't remember if it had been other kids or his father that had hit him. It was the only time the woman had ever commented on her son's pain. _'God loves us to suffer for Her. Only through our suffering can God's Paradise be born into this world. Our pain gives Her life, George! It is blessed!'_

George had forgotten that the God of the Order was personified as a woman. It figured that God would turn out to be a woman, he thought. Who else could watch this world split itself open throughout all its history but a callous mother? It took one cold-hearted bitch to give birth, knowing how unavoidable suffering was, knowing how the world would take her little miracle and turn it inside-out, burst its heart within its chest. Mothers were creators, heedful only of their own lineage, spewing forth innocent life only for the sake of their own ego. He supposed Silent Hill's God was no different.

"You're a bitch, you hear me?" George called out to Her. "Fuck you! Fuck you â€| "

George wiped his arm across his eyes, wondering why he was crying. He blew out a sigh and rolled onto his back. The pain was intolerable, but it grounded him, distracted him from his stupid emotional turmoil. He gripped the window's ledge and pulled himself into a sitting position. He pushed the dingy white curtains aside and looked outside.

Silent Hill was shrouded in fog beneath the corpse-pale sky. A line of black birds sat on a power line cable across the street, and a dog was ambling down the street, sniffing at trash cans. There were no other signs of life. The South Vale district of Silent Hill had never been so dead, as far as he could remember. Had something happened to cause its near-abandonment? The earthquakes, maybe they had done some damage, made the buildings unsafe. The idea of the whole damn street caving in on itself was a pleasant one.

Pendleton returned, with a bowl in one hand and a water bottle in the other. He rolled the office chair from the desk to beside the bed and sat down on it. George watched him warily, not trusting his mild demeanor. Pendleton saw the look in his eyes and shrugged. He put the bowl and water bottle down on the nightstand, and then left the room again. This time, George heard it lock from the outside. There was a sliding deadbolt latch on the outside of his door that his father had installed when he had taken to running away from home at the age of seven.

'You know what happens to convicts when they get caught, don't you? '

George scowled at the memory of his father's words. He had done so much to get on the other side of locked doors, only to end up imprisoned again. The indignity of that was worse than every other.

George glanced at the bowl. There was some kind of soup in it. He was too aggravated and uncomfortable to eat, but he could not stand to look at Pendleton's offering, either. He took the bowl into the adjacent half-bathroom, dumped its content into the toilet, and flushed it. Miraculously, the plumbing still worked. He noticed that his clothes were hanging from the towel rack on the back of the door. They chaffed his sore skin, but he forced himself to dress. Although every scrape of fabric against the welts was agony, he felt better.

Back in his bedroom, he drank from the water bottle. He stood uncertainly, looking around his boyhood room. He was too proud to lie down again, but standing was agony. The welts continued down to his buttocks, but the skin was not split open there, so he managed to sit on the bed. He rubbed his face, shielding his eyes with one hand.

Unbidden, flashes of the previous night blossomed before his mind's eye. His hands tingled from the memory of being strung up until the blood would not run through them. He remembered every lash of that belt, could hear the cracks of it ringing in his ears. As deplorable as those memories were, George tried to cling to them, to avoid being trapped in the ones that were worse.

Nonetheless, the later memories came. He felt the hand on the back of his head, pushing his face into the cold concrete floor. Though his limbs were jellied with fatigue, he had been propped up on his knees, split apart without a shred of sympathy or care, without being left a scrap of dignity. Then the pain had burned from the inside out, straight through him. The worst part was how similar it had been to his most secret, shameful indulgences. The worst part was wondering whether he had wanted it, on some deep, innermost level.

He didn't remember lying down, but suddenly he was curled up on the bed. A strong hand gripped his shoulder, and he looked up. His face and pillow were wet. Crying, again? What was wrong with him? If his father had ever seen him cry this much, he would have given him a well-deserved punch in the face.

"Cupcake," he said groggily. He shrugged Pendleton's hand off his shoulder. "What do you want?"

"Still calling me that?" Pendleton sighed. "Why did you dump that soup? You should eat."

"Not hungry."

"You're sulking."

"Yeah, I wonder why?"

Pendleton was quiet. He sat down on the edge of the bed, looking down at his former abuser and current victim. He struggled with something internal for a moment. Then, he pushed George aside, and lay down on the bed beside him. They barely fit on the twin-sized bed, and it creaked ominously. George scowled, backing into the wall in an effort not to touch the other man. Pendleton turned onto his side, and they were face-to-face.

"I figured out why you were so hurt when I didn't kill Coleridge for you," Pendleton said suddenly. "You really did like what I did to Napier. You admired me killing him to avenge my son, because it was something your father never would have done for you. That's why you kept saying that you thought I was your 'kind of guy'. You liked the idea that I was a good father, the kind you never had."

"Planning on becoming a shrink, cupcake?"

George went to sit up, but Pendleton pushed him back down.

"You thought you had found a good man, a good father, and you were happy with that," Pendleton went on. George squirmed, and he slung an arm over him to keep him in place. "That's why you were so normal with me in the beginning. You respected me. We even got along the few times we talked."

"Yeah, we did," George said, his temper flaring. He reached out and grabbed Pendleton by his shaggy hair. "And then what happened? Huh? You're punishing me for all of this, but it was your fault!"

"Then Coleridge happened." Pendleton pried George's fingers out of his hair and held his hand by the wrist. "He warned me about you. He told me everything that you'd done. He told me what you were."

"He was a judgmental prick!"

"Shh, calm down," Pendleton said impatiently. "Listen. I get it. I understand. I don't think you were right, and I don't think you had a right to kill that man, but I understand. You thought that I would somehow be your protector, the father you never hadâ€" "

"I didn't say that!"

"You thought that I would protect you, and then I refused to," Pendleton rolled over George's protests. "I didn't protect you from the guy that you hated the most in that prison. I didn't protect you from the man that reminded you of your father."

George glared at Pendleton. He wanted to deny it, but what was the use? It was true, and Pendleton knew it. Not wanting to think about how easily Pendleton saw through him, he turned onto his back. He felt blood from some cut wet his shirt beneath the shoulder blade.

"That was when you started hating me," Pendleton said. "You degraded me, humiliated me, had me beaten up and worse. You decided I wasn't worthy of being your father figure. You decided I wasn't even worthy of being treated like any decent man. Years, Sewell. You spent years tormenting me, just because I wouldn't be your new daddy."

"It wasn't like that!" George snapped. "You were an ungrateful bastard! I handed you revenge, and you couldn't even do me one favor to repay me! You betrayed me for that hypocrite, that asshole that was going to wreck my life! You were just like him! My father — yeah, he had something to do with it, sure. You and Coleridge were just like him! Worthless hypocritical scumbags!"

"And you said _I _was a stereotype?" Pendleton said. He reached over and ruffled George's hair, making the man's eyes go wide with fury. "Daddy issues, mommy issues, a kid running away from his hometown, becoming the kind of person that always bullied him. You go beyond stereotypical, Sewell. You're a cliché."

George turned his back on Pendleton. Why not? The man had already seen and had all his backside had to offer, and then some. For some blissful minutes, he thought Pendleton had taken the hint and would finally shut up.

"What did your father do, anyway?"

"Are you ever going to leave me the fuck alone?"

"No," Pendleton said. He sat up, leaning over George's shoulder. "What was he, a guard at a prison over here?"

"No. No, he was a cop," George said. He stared at the wall beneath the window, twisting the frayed edge of the curtains in his hand. "He worked at the Hillside Police Station ever since he was nineteen."

"Yeah, I've been there."

"Why?"

"It's a long story."

"Huh, you really have been here before," George said thoughtfully. He rolled over, facing Pendleton. "Don't think I hated my father because he was a cop. I admired him for that, at first. When I was a kid, he was my hero. I didn't even care when he hit me. I usually deserved it, anyway. That wasn't even the problem."

"Then, what was?"

"Finding out he was a damn hypocrite," George said viciously. "I was thirteen when I saw my father taking money from a drug dealer on the street, instead of arresting him. I thought it was a misunderstanding, or that I had misinterpreted it somehow. I started skipping class to follow him. He beat me for missing so much school every night, meanwhile I saw him every day: taking bribes, rubbing elbows with small local crime lords, going to the goddamn Heaven's Night with corrupt politicians. He was dirty. He was a dirty cop. It was disgusting."

"I hate to break it to you," Pendleton said slowly, "but you're the exact same thing. Well, a dirty prison guard, not a cop, but still."

"Hey, I never let any criminals take advantage of me," George said defensively. He pointed his index finger into Pendleton's shirt, poking him as he spoke. "_I _used _them_. I didn't let them get any perks, I didn't let them get away with anything. I trafficked drugs that would make them suffer and got some money out of itâ€_their _money. I made sure they all knew their place. I made them pay for their sins. So, I profited a little, so what? The way I saw it, anything I could take from them was fair game. They deserved to lose. But my father? He was a chump. He was so hard on me, so intolerant of any little misstep, and meanwhile he was a bitch for the real criminals! He wasn't any fucking hero. He was a coward."

"Oh, man." Pendleton sat up in the bed, giving George a look. "I can't believe you just said all of that with a straight face. Your father was corrupt, Sewell. You're corrupt. Tomato, to-mah-to â€|"

"Fuck you, Pendleton. I'm nothing like my father," George grumbled. "You, on the other hand, you're just like him. No. No, you're worse than he was. My father was a lot of things, but he wasn't a pervert. But you? You're just like that twisted freak Napier."

George expected Pendleton to hit him, but he didn't. He didn't even deny the accusation. He looked out the window, saying nothing. _At least he finally shut up, _George thought. He rolled over to face the wall and shut his eyes. The conversation had depressed him, and he felt claustrophobic with Pendleton on the bed beside him.

"It doesn't matter."

"Ha?"

"We've been going in circles all this time," Pendleton said. "Your parents hurt you, Patrick Napier hurt my son. I hurt Napier, you hurt me, and now I'm hurting you back. And all the time, we've been debating who's right, who's wrong, who the monster really is. The debate is pointless. It doesn't matter who's more wrong. We're _all _monsters here. You, me, your parents, Napier, and everyone else in this goddamned world. Maybe â€| Maybe Charlie is better off dead. Maybe he was better off dying before he just grew up to be another monster."

George rolled onto his back and stared up at the man. He had developed a practical fear of Pendleton after he had realized how efficient the man was at causing him pain, but now, for the first

time, he felt truly scared of him. How the hell could a man say his son was better off being raped and drowned?

"God, that's dark," George said. He paused. "What the hell happened to you, Pendleton?"

"You really want to know?"

"Might as well hear it," George said wearily. "You're sure as hell not letting me go anywhere anytime soon, right?"

A small smile on Pendleton's lips. He put a possessive hand on George's arm. "That's right."

Pendleton sat back, leaning against the bed's headboard. Soreness outweighed pride, so George remained lying on his side next to him. Pendleton took a breath, and then proceeded to tell George everything that had happened after the prison bus had crashed, and he had ended up in Silent Hill.

7. Chapter 7

****7****

Pendleton was remarkably civil to George in the days following. He was attentive enough to be considered caring, even. George harbored a deep mistrust of the kindness, but he finally broken down and accepted food. He had every opportunity to make a run for it, but he could never muster up the courage. He began to realize that the night of torture Pendleton was trying so hard to forget happened had broken his spirit. His will to escape had dwindled, and he could not bring himself to draw the monster lurking within Pendleton out again.

And the monster is still there, George thought one night, pushing food around his plate with a fork. He lifted his eyes from his plate to Pendleton, sitting at the kitchen counter on a stool. The man has split. He acts like a regular joe, like we're just two guys talking, and then he'll just grab me, like I'm his bitch—or like I'm his kid, sick as that is. Then I'll catch him looking at me like he wants me, or like he wants to hurt me again. He's become some kind of amalgam of the man he was, the father he wanted to be, Napier, and — well, and me. —

"So what is it with this 'Paradise' the Order wants to bring into this world again?" Pendleton asked now. "Is that the other world where I was when I wasn't in the real Silent Hill?"

"For the last time, I don't know," George said irritably. "I never payed attention to all of ma's crazy religious crap."

Pendleton frowned at him. He had been asking about the Order more often, and seemed taken by the local religion. He had even told George that he had gone into town asking about it, but no one was willing to talk about the Order.

"You know," Pendleton finally said. He put his plate down and walked over to George. He pulled his head back by his hair. "You know more about this place than you're saying. Tell me."

"Fuck you," George snarled, hitting his hand away. He got up and pushed past him, rubbing his head. "I said I don't know. Believe me or don't, just leave me the fuck alone already."

"What is it, Sewell?" Pendleton asked, grabbing the man by the arm. "Your bruises healed, so you've got your attitude back?"

George tried to pull away, but he was yanked closer. Pendleton lifted his face to his own harshly.

"You need a reminder of what I can do to you?" Pendleton asked. "Or are you going to respect me?"

"No, I'm good," George said. Pendleton let him tug his arm out of his grasp. George's temper got the best of him. He gave Pendleton a pushing tap on the chest, and added, "Cupcake."

Pendleton grabbed him by his shirt and arm. George had been expecting it, and grabbed the old toaster off of the kitchen counter. He smashed it into Pendleton's face until he was released. He ran, but Pendleton managed to grab him by the shirt. He pulled him back, and George kicked his shin once, twice, three times. Pendleton smashed him into the kitchen counter in return, and kneed him in the stomach. He fell, and Pendleton followed him to the floor.

"You must enjoy this or something," Pendleton remarked. Holding the side of his face, which was bleeding, he used his free hand to pull the cord out of the weaponized toaster. "Or did you think that one time was enough? That I'd gotten punishing you out of my system?"

"I don't know, you've been pretty friendly lately, cupcake."

Pendleton bound his wrists with the electrical cord, and then lifted him to his feet. George kicked at him and struggled. The fight was futile, but it was refreshing; anything to stop the insipid pretense of civility Pendleton had been keeping up.

Pendleton frog-marched him to the bedroom, despite the occasional struggle. He looked down at him, considering, and then dragged him over to the bed. He forced him down on his stomach over it, and tied his bound wrists to the headboard.

"You said a few days ago that I was just like your father," Pendleton said. "I guess you were right, Sewell. You like being right, don't you? You once told me at Ryall that you were always right."

"I also said you were like Napier," George said. "Guess I was right about that, too, huh?"

"No. I don't hurt children. You're no boy, Sewell, not anymore." Pendleton tugged the man's hair, leaning down closely over him. "Even if I am going to punish you like one."

"Oh, you son-of-a-bitch! God_damn_ you, Pendleton!"

Pendleton did not seem to be as brutal as he had been that first night, but that was cold comfort. George turned red, lying there bent over his old bed, prone and tied up. Pendleton reached under him and opened his fly, then tugged his black jeans down to his ankles. His

briefs followed, and the back of his shirt was pushed up. Driving the humiliation home, Pendleton gave his uplifted buttocks a hard slap.

"I'm gonna kill you for this, Pendleton," George said. "I don't care if you come back again! I'm gonna kill you!"

He heard the quiet jangle of a belt buckle being undone. Pendleton's arm went under his waist, lifting his backside up further. He held him with a blend of fatherly tenderness and sexual pressure that made George feel a host of conflicting emotions. Then the belt struck across his buttocks, rekindling a memory of the night of the thunderstorm. George struggled weakly, and then gave up. Resigned, he set his jaw, and took the whacks in stoic silence.

"There, you see? You can shut that mouth of yours," Pendleton said after a while. "You just need the right motivation."

George screwed his eyes shut, trying to hold his temper in check. The belt licked the center of one cheek for what felt like the millionth time, and a tiny grunt of pain escaped him. He pressed into the bed, as if he could escape the belt that way, and buried his face in the blue quilt.

The thing was, he knew exactly how Pendleton felt. He recalled the one young guy that had been incarcerated at Ryall, the one that had committed suicide within a year: Seaton. That had been during George's early years at the prison, and Seaton had had the misfortune of being the first one to make a deal with him. George had always wondered what his father had felt, taking total power over him, and he had conducted experiments in power on the young con. He had discovered that having absolute control over another human being was more arousing than sex. Seaton had drunkenly mowed down a little girl with his car, so George had been guiltless as he took whatever he wanted from the man's body, his mind, his soul. He had felt like a minor god, able to mold the other man into whatever he wanted or needed. There was no other feeling quite like it.

_I can't blame him, _George thought miserably, _and I can't hate him. I even admire him for this on some level. I never thought anyone, __**anyone**__, would ever get the best of me like this. He's really gotten strong._

"How long are you going to keep punishing me, Murphy?"

"Murphy now, is it?" Pendleton asked. "Not 'cupcake' or 'Pendleton'?"

"This isn't fair, and you know it," George said. "Okay, so I was hard on you, sure, but you started it. _You _betrayed _me_ first, remember? You went back on our deal. I was just punishing you for that, and now you've punished me for punishing you. Aren't we even yet?"

"I'm not doing this to get even with you."

Whack!

"Then what is this?"

"It's â€¦ fun."

George shut his eyes again, shaking his head. They were alike, even more so than he had guessed. In fact, Pendleton might even be a harder man than he was.

"You're a bad boy, _George_," Pendleton said. He swung the belt fast and hard. "And bad boys should be spanked, don't you think?"

"All right, all right, all right!" George yelled, writhing beneath the flurry of whacks. "Look, I'll make you a dealâ€¦"

"A deal? Seriously?" Pendleton laughed so hard that he actually stopped beating him. He held the back of his hand to the man's glowing, hot buttocks. "That's what started everything between us, and you want to make _another_ deal? I think you are into this, Sewell. I think you're honestly enjoying this."

"I'm not," George muttered. "I'm not, believe me. So let's just call a truce, all right? I'll tell you whatever I know about this damn town, and I won't try to kill you again. I won't even touch you. We'll talk, and go our separate ways, all right? We'll call it all even. Wouldn't you like for all this to just be over already, cupâ€¦" Pendleton?"

Pendleton was quiet, rubbing a palm up and down George's buttocks now. Finally, he gave him a spank, and took up the belt again.

"No, I don't want it to be over," he said. With sudden viciousness, he whipped the belt hard across George's ass. This time, the man cried out. "I want _this_. I need it. I haven't felt this alive in years. But I don't have to explain that to you, do I? You know exactly how that feels."

"I thought you didn't want to be like me!" George yelled. "You spent all those years judging me, I saw it in your eyes! Ahâ€¦" aaooww! Ow, damn it!"

"Things change. I changed." Pendleton stood up to swing the belt with full force. "You just be glad I'm not beating you to death."

"Thought you said I wouldn't stay dead?"

"You wouldn't. I could do it over and over again." Pendleton gave his bottom a slap with his palm. "So you just stay there and take this. No deals. No talking. You'll just take what I give you. You're the one without a choice this time."

So he was. Defeat was becoming a familiar companion to George Sewell, and he knew when to accept it. He put his low reserves of remaining energy into not crying, and buckled down to take the rest of the whipping.

* * *

><p>"Y-you bastard." George was untied, and he slid to the floor. Undignified as it was, he reached back and rubbed his seared bottom furiously. The flesh felt too soft, and was burning hot despite the apartment's constant chill. "Oh, you bastard."

"Watch your mouth," Pendleton said, nudging his bottom with his foot. He put his belt back on, buckled it. "I'm going to the other side of town. Maybe I'll find something out there, since you're no help."

Pendleton knelt down in front of George. He held his flushed face in one hand.

"You just stay here a while," he said. "Cool that temper of yours, _cupcake_."

Pendleton released his face with a push and stood up. He left the room, locking the door outside. George yelled insults after him, but got no response. He heard the man's footsteps go down the hall, and then the sound of the apartment door opening and shutting. He was alone.

Grudgingly, the man pulled his briefs and jeans back up. _Jesus, I'd forgotten how much that stings, _he thought, rubbing his backside. He climbed to his feet slowly, stung by pain and embarrassment. He tried the door, but it would not budge. He was grateful for the time alone, anyway. Although he had been sleeping too much since coming back to Silent Hill, he was tired yet again. He climbed into bed, and closed his eyes.

* * *

><p>When he woke up, George Sewell was seventeen again, and back in that alley behind the Heaven's Night. His entire body was sore with two days-old bruises, and he had had enough. He had promised himself, as his eighteenth birthday neared, that he would never be beaten by his dirty cop of a father again. He had followed him out here with a camera and a microphone, to get proof of the man's underhanded dealings. He recorded a video of his father taking money from one of the local drug traffickers, grinning to himself all the while. The money shot was when his father shook hands with the scumbag, a friendly smile on his face. George shook his head, nauseated. The criminal departed, and he watched his father remove a flask from inside his jacket. He was about to leave, but his sneaker hit a nearby box, and a can fell from its place. It hit the alley pavement and rolled down it lazily. His father whipped around, a hand reaching to the holster on his belt.<p>

"Who's there?"

George stepped around the reeking dumpster, camera in hand. He smirked over at his father, holding the camera in plain view. His father hesitated, and then his hand left the gun holster.

"Oh, it's just you," he said. "Hell are you doing out here, George? You following me again?"

"Last time, pops, I swear," George said. He lifted the camera. "I got everything I need from you, and soon so will your superiors at the PD."

"What the hell are you talking about?" grumbled Owen Sewell. He took out his flask and drank from it again. "Stop screwing around, George. You're too old to be playing games."

"We'll see what's a game when the whole town sees you cozying up to drug dealers!" George yelled at him. He stepped down the alley towards his father. "I got it all right here, dad! Proof! You're finished!"

"You think a few snapshots are going to sink _me_?" Owen asked his son, pitying and repelled simultaneously. He reached out and hit the camera from out of his son's hand. "You honestly think anyone in this town is going to take the word of my good-for-nothing kid over _mine_?"

"They won't have a choice!" George said, though his confidence wavered. It took effort to hold his father's steady blue gaze. "I gotâ€"I got proof."

"You got nothing!" Owen roared at his boy. "All you got is shit-poor grades and a big mouth! You think that'll amount to anything if you go up against me? I got friends, son, real important friends. I got respect. I got a badge! So what do you got, again? Ha? What?"

Owen poked his son's chest as he asked the questions, hard enough to push him back. George blinked away the tears that welled in his eyes. He couldn't even bring himself to pick up the camera. It looked petty and juvenile on the street, as pathetic as he was.

"I'll tell you what you got, kid." Owen suddenly grabbed George and slammed him into the wall. "You got a beating coming, that's what you got. I don't care if you're going to be eighteen, you're some kind of goddamn retard, anyway."

"Get off of me!" George screamed furiously. The disgrace of being helpless in public, even if they were alone, was too much. "You fucking drunk!"

"Don't you talk to me like that!"

George's face was pulled back and then slammed into the brick wall. Pain cracked across his eyes, and he saw lights bloom across his vision. His father felt enormous behind him, with so much more weight than his skinny frame, and so much more height. He heard him unbuckling his belt, and his stomach twisted.

"Don't," George pleaded. He hated the sound of his voice, so young and scratchy with pain. "Please don't do this. Let's just go home. Let me just go home. It's late, ma's gonna worry."

"Your mother doesn't give a crap whether you're coming or going," Owen said. "Or me."

"Dad, pleaseâ€" "

"Stop being a little bitch!" Owen growled, slamming George against the wall again. He had the belt in hand, and struck George across the back through his thin tee-shirt. "You're a fucking disgrace. Didn't think I'd hear about the weird shit you've been doing with that Smith boy, did you?"

George stopped struggling from the shock of the words. Shame welled inside him like blood from an internal wound, dark and dirty life's

blood. The belt struck him again, but he hardly noticed.

"Yeah, that's right, I heard," Owen said. "Think I don't hear things? You make me sick."

George's head was slammed against the brick wall again, and everything went blurry. A fog came over his awareness and his thinking turned sluggish. He felt his father hitting him, heard him insulting him. He looked at the camera on the pavement, and knew his father was right, that no one would care about the truth even if they were made to see it. He had nothing: nothing to save him, nothing to escape with, nothing to make life worth living, nothing, absolutely nothing. He had nothing, and he was nothing.

George looked up at the gray sky, and then his eyes fell on something closer. A pipe was sticking out of the dumpster next to him, old and rusty but solid. Without thinking about it, he reached out, and his hand closed around it. His father had rolled up his shirt and was beating him in earnest now, too invested in the belting to notice.

There was a miraculous freedom in realizing that you had nothing, and that day was the first time George Sewell tasted that freedom. With the pipe in his hand, he realized that he had nothing to lose: everything had already been denied or stolen away. His very worthlessness made him untouchable.

And maybe, just maybe, he could finally take something away from them. It did not matter if he was entitled to or not. It did not matter if it was revenge, justice, or evil. All the world had done was hurt him, and maybe this was the moment to hurt it back.

George twisted out of his father's grasp and turned around to face him. His father looked startled and confused by his rebellion, as if it was beyond his comprehension that George would ever try to fight back. The look infuriated George, and he wasted no time in breaking it off his father's face with a ringing crack of the pipe.

The rest was a blur, a blur of violence and purest ecstasy.

* * *

><p>George woke up shaking and sweating. I did that, he marveled as the dream's memory throbbed in his brain. His hand curled and uncurled, remembering the rough solidity of that old pipe. His hand had felt stuck to it afterwards, glued by the blood slicking the rusty metal. He stared at his hand, the fingers opening and closing, and remembered his father's blood running into his own scrapes, like some obscene family blood rite. He wondered where his gloves were.

"I did that," the man said softly. "I did that. I did that."

He had killed his father in that alley. He didn't even recall what his father had been saying throughout it, though he knew he had been talking. Had he pleaded for mercy? Had he apologized? Had he confessed to loving his son after all? Or had he just gone on insulting him? He would never know.

George looked up at the locked door, and misery crippled him. He had

done so much to escape this town. He had done so much to escape his father. He had given everything to be on the other side of captivity, everything, and here he was, no better than he had started. It was sickeningly unfair.

George jumped out of bed and stalked over to the door. He pounded it until both shoulders were sore, and then kicked it until his energy ran out. Despite the deadbolt, it was a flimsy wooden door, but he could not even dent it. His head ached, and the disquieting sense of wrongness returned.

In desperation and rage, George destroyed his boyhood room. He demolished toys and furniture as if he could kill the weak little boy he had once been through the destruction. It was a tantrum, but he didn't care, the fury felt good. If he had had a lighter, he would have set the apartment aflame, and happily would have gone up with it.

He tried the window, but there were bars running across it from outside. He tried to dislodge them, but like the door, they were unnaturally sturdy. He paced the wrecked room like a caged animal, fear starting to overtake anger.

"No, no, no, no! I'm not going down like this!" he screamed at the apartment, the town, and the absent Pendleton. He punched the wall. "You hear me? I'm not going to end like this! I'm not going to be prisoner! Ha, ha, oh no, not me! Not me! Not George fucking Sewell! I won't do it! You hear me? I won't do it again!"

He punched the wall again and again. The drywall shook, and the apartment seemed to shudder. He hit the wall again, and his arm went straight through it. Something ripped his sleeve open and gashed his arm, and he withdrew it immediately. It felt like a bite, but he figured he had just scraped it. He rubbed his arm, staring at the wall. The drywall crumbled and then fell into a pile at his feet. The wall continued to break apart even without his efforts, until there was a wide, ragged hole.

George touched the edges of the hole. The hole had been plastered over, and then covered with a spare sheet of wallpaper, less yellowed than the neighboring sheets. This had never been here when he was a kid; had an earthquake caused the hole? Why would the super cover it up so methodically, if he had to know George hadn't been back to the place in years?

George set the pointless questions aside, thinking of escape. He gingerly reached into the hole, feeling where the jagged edges of metal were. It was a very large hole, and he was a slim enough guy, he would probably be able to crawl through it. Nonetheless, peering into that dusty darkness gave him pause.

Fuck it, he finally decided. He climbed up and slid into the hole. It was a squeeze between the wood beams, but he managed to wriggle through. Then, it was a short crawl to the nearest wall. He shouldered the drywall, and finally broke through it. He pushed and scraped, and fell out of the hole to the floor. He was powdered with dust and insulation fibers, which he coughed and spat out of his mouth. He rubbed his eyes and got to his feet, looking around.

This was ma and dad's room, he knew instantly. The master bedroom

was small and plain, decorated with old dark walnut furniture. He had rarely gone into this room as a kid, as its grim sterility had always disturbed him. Now that he was an adult, he wondered how his parents had ever mustered the passion to produce him in a severe room like this. The only personal touches were a vanity with dusty bottles of perfume, a hairbrush with black and silver hairs still wrapped in the bristles, and some framed photographs on the bedside table. George walked up to these and looked through them. He turned the single baby picture of himself face-down.

George went to leave the room, but incredibly, the door would not open. He doubted Pendleton would have foreseen his crawling through a hole in the wall to get in here and thus locked this room up. Why would this door be locked? Last time he was here, his mother had been dead. Had she left the room locked the final time she left home? Why would she?

George searched the room, but he already knew in his gut that there would be no key. He didn't even have the heart to disrupt the room too much. Defeated, he sat down on his parents' bed, staring at the mirrored closet doors on the other side of the room. He looked pale, filthy, and beaten. It was a pathetic sight.

That was when he remembered the gun. George stood up, his face blank, and went to the chest of drawers by the door. Sure enough, at the bottom of the first drawer, there was an old service pistol. When he was tall enough to reach that drawer, he used to sometimes sneak in here and just stare at that old gun. He never dared touch it, knowing he'd catch hell for it, but he had enjoyed contemplating its steely power. He used to tell himself, one day he would use it. The thought chilled him to his core now.

George reached into the drawer and took the gun. He cradled it in his hands like a priest with a sacred text, and crossed the room. He sat at the foot of his parent's bed, and stared at the gun. The gun seemed to stare right back. Outside, it began to rain again.

8. Chapter 8

****8****

Murphy Pendleton lost track of time in Silent Hill. When he had first come back to the town after the fateful visit with Carol, he had kept himself hidden from the few people that came and went. He was still an escaped felon, after all. Time went by and he could not hide forever, though, and venturing out, he found that no one recognized him. If anyone did, they didn't seem to care. He used a fake name to be on the safe side, but not even the police recognized him. He supposed that being dead was a state beyond all statutes of limitations.

Murphy did believe that he and Sewell were dead. He had not eaten or slept for weeks after visiting Carol; he had only wandered in the cold, until he passed out and woke up back in Silent Hill, which was miles from where he had been. As for Sewell, Murphy had seen murder in Anne's eyes when he had told her that it had been Sewell that had killed her father. It could not be a simple coincidence that Murphy and Sewell were now mysteriously in the limbo nightmare that was Silent Hill. The first time he had been to Silent Hill, after his

prison transfer bus had crushed, he had seen things, lived things, that proved the town to be no normal place on Earth. He knew that the dead could walk in this town, and he believed that he and Sewell could be counted among their numbers now.

The question that Murphy wanted answered wasâ€”_why_? Silent Hill's population was far too low for it to be a nexus for all the dead or undead souls of the world. Obviously, only select souls ended up in this strange place, but those souls were trapped in the town indefinitely, to the point where not even death could free them. Murphy had felt himself die several times when he had first been to Silent Hill, and he had seen Anne Marie Cunningham fall to her death, as well. Yet he had survived the town, his visit to Carol had proved that, and so had Anne, he had seen her from a distance, getting into a police car. They had escaped once, the town had let them go.

So why had it drawn Murphy back? Would it draw Anne back too, someday? Why had they been reprieved from death by the town in the first place? What made them different from anyone else? What connected them to this place? It made sense that Sewell was here, if he had been born here, but Murphy had never heard of the place in his life. Why had the town chosen him?

Murphy spent days in town searching through records and historical accounts for answers. The town had a complicated history plagued by tragedy and overshadowed by its clandestine religion. Even before the town was settled by Europeans, the Native American tribes of the region had held this land to be sacred. The power here seemed to take many forms, and molded itself to fit many different iterations of religion. Determining the source of the power was impossible, and so was finding out whether it was wholesome or malevolent. Silent Hill's history was as labyrinthine as its geography.

In the back of his mind, Murphy knew that he had abandoned Sewell. He did not think the man would die, did not think he _could_ die in this town, but there was a part of him that was aware of his predicament. If Sewell had not broken out of his room, he would have water from the tap in his bathroom, but not a crumb of food. Not to mention, Sewell seemed to have lost something vital to his confidence after the night of the thunderstorm. There was no telling how he was feeling alone in that room for all these days, beaten and forgotten.

In truth, Murphy was afraid to go back to Sewell. He did not trust himself around that man, did not like the bestial urges that rose inside when he was with him. When he had seen him that thunder-stricken night, after Sewell had tried to kill him, something that was both his truest self and an alien monster had taken him over. He was mortified by the things he had done, and yet every time he remembered, a smile haunted his lips, and he caught himself getting aroused. That monster was still there, dying to play with its prey again, and he loathed it.

_ 'I don't even recognize you anymore.' _

Carol had said those words to him, the last time he had seen her. He had looked at her in the living room of her new house, standing in front of the picture of her new man, and the monster had reared its head. Guilt and shame had lulled the monster to sleep since it had been born of Napier's blood, but that cold winter's night, it had

awoken again.

'How can you do this, Carol? How could you just move away? How can you just move on? How could you forget your own son? What kind of woman does that?'

'I had to! Don't you understand that, Murphy? I would have died if I hadn't moved on!'

'Then maybe you should have!'

'How can you say that to me?'

Murphy had run away shortly after that. He had run from the monster, from what the monster wanted to do to his ex-wife. He ran and ran, and then he walked, and then he was back in Silent Hill.

_'The monster brought me back, _Murphy realized suddenly. He was sitting at the Heaven's Night bar, drinking like a condemned man. _It was the monster that brought me back to Silent Hill. This is where monsters live. Anne had a monster inside her when she came here, the monster that wanted me dead because she thought I killed her father. And Sewell, well, he's just a monster altogether._

"Another one."

An elderly man was tending the bar. He was poised and dressed in an old-fashioned manner, complete with vest and tie. He made no move to refill Murphy's glass.

"I think that you've had enough," he said mildly. "I've seen you hanging around for a few days. Don't you think it's time you went home, Murphy?"

_'I told this guy my real name? _Murphy wondered. _I must have had more to drink than I thought._

"Home?"

"To the Blue Creek Apartments, I meant."

"That's Sewell's home, not mine."

The old bartender looked straight into his eyes. For a moment, Murphy had the crazy idea that he knew he had Sewell locked up there. More than that, he imagined the bartender saw all the things he had done to Sewell. The old man seemed to be looking straight at the beast half-slumbering inside him.

Murphy blinked, and the suspicions passed. Murphy rubbed his temples, exhaling in relief. He ordered a glass of water, and the bartender obliged.

"It is late," the bartender said after a quiet moment. "Won't your friend be wondering about where you are?"

"Friend?"

"George."

"_Sewell_? He's no friend," Murphy scoffed. He noticed a shadow of a frown pass over the bartender's face. "He grew up around here, right? You know him?"

"I was a friend of his mother's. I knew him when he was a child."

"Was he a prick then, or was that something he grew into?"

"George was a very sullen child," the bartender reflected. "Granted, he had a hard life, but he never appreciated the lessons it might have taught him. He ran from them. He ran from every responsibility. He ran even from his mother's love. Regardless of what he might believe, his mother did love him. She loved him very much, in fact. He was her little boy."

Murphy twitched, staring into his glass uncomfortably. He remembered his own son cradled in his mother's arms, the way love had shone through her eyes when she looked at him. He thought of the last time he had seen Sewell, doing his best to keep from crying on the floor of his childhood room. Why did every monster have to be someone's little boy?

"I have to go," Murphy said reluctantly. He stood up from the bar stool, feeling older than his years. "My, uh, 'friend', you know."

"Yes, I know."

Murphy turned to leave, but then the bartender spoke again.

"Mr. Pendleton?"

"Yeah?" Murphy asked, turning back to him.

"All monsters are human," the bartender said. He held up a hand when Murphy went to speak. "You've been researching the power of this town, the Order's religion, but none of those matters have anything to do with the monsters you are facing right now."

"Because â€| those monsters are human?"

"Yes, that's right," the bartender said. "But think about those words, Mr. Pendleton: _all monsters are human_. The meaning is twofold. Yes, it means that there is a beast within every human being, and that is discouraging. But it also means that within every beast, there is a human being: a man, a woman â€| a little girl â€| or a little boy."

"Yeah, but does it even matter?" Murphy asked tiredly. "Whatever innocent little boy Patrick Napier might have been once, did it matter when he raped and murdered my own little boy? Did my inner child's protests stop me from bludgeoning Napier to death, even after he cried out like a child, begging me to stop, pleading with me to spare him? Whether Sewell's mother loved him or not is irrelevant to the fact that he was the one that handed me Napier, and that was only one of many, many men that he's either killed or gotten killed. And me â€| Even if my parents had stayed around long enough to love me, would it have mattered? Or would I just have grown up to be the

monster I am now, anyway?"

The bartender said nothing, only polished a glass with a clean dishrag.

"Parents are the worst monsters of them all," Murphy went on, unable to stop. "We force life into this shitty world for our own delusions of immortality, and then we spend the rest of our lives lying about it. That's all raising a kid is, lying to them. We tell them not to be afraid of the Bogeyman, when pretend monsters are the last things they have to worry about in this world. We tell them not be afraid afraid of the dark, when we know that they'll never be safe, not even in the light. We tell them to be careful of strangers, when we know it's the people they love the most that are going to hurt them. We say we'll always be there, when we â€¦ when we know someday, in some unforgivable way, we â€¦ we're going to let them down."

Murphy pounded his fist down on the bar counter.

"So does it matter that we're all precious to some monster-parents?" he asked angrily. "Does the simple fact of being born entitle any of us to sympathy? To mercy? Does it matter that all women are daughters? Does it matter that all men â€¦ have been someone's son?"

"You seem to know the answer to that," the bartender said. He met Murphy's eyes. "Does it?"

Murphy searched those unfathomable blue eyes for a minute. Then, he pushed away from the bar.

"I have to go," he said.

* * *

><p>Murphy returned to the Blue Creek Apartments in a brooding mood. He kept thinking of Sewell, the last time he had beaten him. The monster was roused, and clawing at him with the desire to do it all over again. The weary revenant of his humanity was lacerated by guilt over how he had treated the other man. He was caught between the conflicting personas, not knowing which side he wanted to triumph. He wished that he had died when Sewell had pushed him off the edge of town.<p>

Murphy returned to Apartment 208, and unlocked the door. Everything was still and dark inside. He went to Sewell's bedroom door and unfastened the deadbolt. He waited a moment, but there was no sound from inside. Unsettled, he went in.

The room looked like it had been hit by a tornado. He carefully entered, expecting Sewell to attack him at any moment. The man was not in the room, however, nor in the adjacent half-bathroom. Puzzle, Murphy walked over to the gaping hole in the wall of the bedroom. He called in, but got no response. He couldn't see through to the other side.

Murphy returned to the hallway, and unlocked the door to the room beside Sewell's. He braced himself for an attack, and went in. The room had no windows, and was very dark. He shut the door behind himself, waiting for his eyes to adjust. When they did, he saw

Sewell. The man was sitting on the floor beside a double bed, his head bowed over one knee.

"There you are," Murphy said. "I was wondering where you hadâ€" "

Sewell's head snapped up, his dark eyes flashing even in the dim light. He raised his arm, and Murphy noticed the gun in his hand. He looked down its barrel, and then met Sewell's eyes. He had the hunted, haunted look of an animal.

"Don't move," Sewell said. He got to his feet. His legs wobbled, but his hand steadily kept the gun pointed at Murphy's head. "Don't you come near me."

"Hey, take it easy," Murphy said. "Look, I didn't come back to hurt you."

"Like hell you didn't," Sewell said. His legs shook and he steadied himself with one hand on the bed. "Like hell. You said it to me the first day I woke up in this hellhole, didn't you? When you found me here, you suddenly knew what you were living for, you had a purpose. Punishing me, it's all you got left, isn't it?"

Murphy had the feeling a lie wouldn't cut it, so he said nothing.

"Hell, I don't blame you, cupcake," Sewell said. He laughed humorlessly. "How could I? I did the same thing. For years, all I lived for was to see my fucking old man get his. It's liberating, isn't it? You stop being yourself, stop being a person, and you just become â€| an instrument of someone else's destruction. And an instrument doesn't hurt, doesn't cry â€| an instrument can't feel anything. At least, not until the moment of consummation. I wasn't expecting that. Were you? Did you ever think that-that the moment you first hit that fuck Napier, that you would feel such perfect joy?"

"No. No, I didn't, Sewell."

"But you felt it, right?" Sewell laughed, waving the gun vicariously. "Yeah. Yeah, that's what I felt, too. I felt that exact same thing when I beat my old man to death."

"You _what_?"

"Don't look so shocked, cupcake, you should have seen that coming," Sewell said. He kept the gun on Murphy as he paced a few steps. "Yeah, I killed him. I killed my father. He was the first scumbag that I got rid of with my own two hands. I didn't mean to, didn't set out to do it, but I did, and you know what? It felt amazing. I've killed more men since then: rapists, murderers, pedophiles â€| Frank Coleridge. I've killed plenty of other men, but none of those times ever quite lived up to the first. You never forget your first. But I don't have to tell you that, right?"

"No," Murphy replied truthfully. "No, I'll never forget Patrick Napier."

"Best feeling in the world, right?"

"No, you're wrong," Murphy said. "And I'm not just saying that. It was an ugly pleasure, killing Napier, but it was pleasure. I won't deny that. But the purest joy I have ever felt, that was watching my son being born. No matter what came later, no matter how that ended, I'll never lose those first moments with my son. That was the best feeling in the world to me."

Sewell looked at him for a moment, his arm drooping a little. He shook his head, raising the gun again.

"Well, that's gone now," he said flatly. "I don't got daddy to kill anymore, and you don't got little Charlie to love anymore. So here we are."

"Yeah. Here we are."

Sewell walked over to him, until the end of the gun's barrel was pressed to Murphy's forehead.

"You know I won't die if you shoot me," Murphy said. "Even if I do, I'll just come back."

"I know. I-I _saw you fall_," Sewell said, his voice cracking. He laughed, cleared his throat, and stepped back. "I saw you fall. You didn't hit anything on the way down, you didn't grab onto anything, there was nothing to break it, you just fell. A fall like that would have killed anyone. But you came back. You came back, and you found me. You'll always find me, right?"

"Yeah, I will," Murphy said. "So just put the gun down. It's pointless."

"Yeah. You know the definition of insanity, cupcake?"

"Doing the same thing over and over, while expecting a different result? That?"

"That's the one," Sewell said. His dark eyes gleamed in the light from the hallway, and he smiled tightly. "That's why â€| That's why I'm not gonna shoot _you_, Pendleton."

Sewell snapped his arm back and aimed the gun at his own temple. That was when Murphy recognized the preoccupied, thunder-stricken look that had been in his eyes for what it was: an absence of spirit. Murphy had not only broken the man, he had murdered his very spirit. Sewell had nothing left, nothing but a bullet.

Murphy had once dreamed of seeing Sewell like this, in his cell at Ryall State. He should have felt the smug satisfaction that he had when he had actively broken him down. He should have felt the bliss of cruelty Sewell had just described. If not, then he should have felt guilt over torturing another human being until they were lost utterly. He should be celebrating victory, or lamenting it, but he could do neither. What Murphy felt wasâ€"anger.

"Oh cry me a fucking river, Sewell."

Sewell blinked. "_What_"

"You heard me, cry me a river," Murphy said. "What's the matter? Choking on your own medicine? Come on, you know how prison works! You were always so pragmatic about it: the power struggle, the indomitable hierarchy, the deals, the give and take. 'Just deal with it, cupcake, because that's the way it is,' is what you told me. So why don't you stop whining like a bitch and take your own advice for once?"

Sewell's hand trembled. Murphy saw a spark of anger bring his eyes back to life. Then, it died away, and he smiled and shrugged.

"Tough love? You really are taking this psych thing too far lately, cupcake," Sewell said. He cocked the gun. "It isn't going to work, Pendleton. I don't like you, and you still can piss me off, but I don't hate you. I never did hate you, you know that? And even if I did, so what? It's not like I can ever end you."

"How do you know you can even end yourself?" Murphy asked. "How do you know you won't just wake up here again?"

"I don't know, but it's the only play I have left," Sewell said, though his hand shook. He swallowed. "Besides, if you knew I weren't going to die, you wouldn't have that stupid worried expression on your face, would you now?"

"Sewell, don't be stupid," Murphy said. "You're too much of an asshole to kill yourself, so just shut up and put the gun down."

Murphy walked towards him, and Sewell backed away. Murphy's heart was racing. He knew it would be better for them both if Sewell did just kill himself and end all this, but the thought `â€|` hurt. The idea of being left alone in Silent Hill pained him.

"Don't do this," Murphy pleaded. "For fuck's sake, Sewell! I already have Charlie and Coleridge and even fucking Napier on me! Don't you put your death on me, too! Don't you fucking do that to me!"

"Oh, what do you know? I `_`can `_`still hurt you," Sewell grinned hatefully.

"Not like this. Sewell, not like this!"

Murphy lunged at him, and Sewell stepped back. He hit the wall, and re-gripped the gun. Murphy reached for the gun again in desperation.

"Yes, like this. This is how it ends. My terms, always my terms," Sewell said. His eyes glimmered, and he grimaced. Fear broke across his face, but the determination did not waver. "Maybe I'll see you in another life, cupcake."

Murphy grabbed his wrist, just as Sewell pulled the trigger. The sound was deafening, and was followed by utter stillness. The moment felt suspended in time, and then blood splattered the wall, and the man dropped heavily to the floor.

9

George woke up on a metal grate. Snow was falling, a flake brushing his cheek then blowing away. He climbed to his feet, groggy as was always the case lately. His mouth tasted like rotten meat and his throat was dry. He coughed hard, some of the swirling flakes drawn into his nose and mouth. It was not snow, it was ash and tiny flakes of debris. He spit as best he could, watching the thin stream of fluid fall through the grate beneath his shoes. There was darkness below, but it seemed to twist with shadowy bodies. George sneered and looked away.

He was on Katz Street, a few blocks down from the Blue Creek Apartments. The pavement seemed to have been stripped away by earthquake damage, revealing metal supports and grating, and the only light came from the intermittent flickering of an orange sodium light some yards away. Had there been an earthquake? All he remembered was being in his old bedroom, talking to someone—"yes, that man, the prisoner, Pendleton"—What were they talking about? He had been upset, something hurt, someone had hurt him — George grasped at the image, but it retreated away into the depths of his mind.

Hell with it, he thought. He looked himself over. He was wearing the black outfit the strange old bartender had given him when he left the hospital, and was unarmed. What did it take to get a weapon in this damn town? He searched the street, but it was too dark to see any object at all, let alone one with lethal potential. He jogged down the street towards the streetlight ahead. The metal grate rattling beneath his footsteps.

Discarded near the center of the circle of light was a rusty old pipe. George picked it up, grinning at the solid weight in his gloved hand. He remembered a look of astonishment in a piss-stained alley, the jarring shock of impact traveling up his entire arm, the warm spray of blood on his bare hands. For just a second, he almost dropped the thing, but ultimately he only held it more tightly.

There was a sound nearby. George turned, and a can rolled into the orange glow of the sodium lamp. He followed the direction it had come from, and was faced with a gash between two buildings, dark as oblivion.

"Who's there?" he asked. The words felt strange on his tongue. No, he thought, this isn't how it goes. I was the one that knocked down that can. And it was dad that said 'Who's there', not me. This isn't right.

George gripped the pipe in both hands, approaching the pitch black opening to the alley.

"Who's there!" he shouted.

"Whuhse therah," came a deep, muffled reply.

Though the voice was distorted, George recognized it. His stomach knotted up inside, and his blood ran cold. He steeled himself, lifting the pipe.

"C-come on out," he said, voice quivering. The sound offended him,

made him angry at being brought down by his fear, and the anger gave him his nerve back. "Come on! I know it's you! Come on and get it over with, dad!"

There was a glutinous sound, and shuffling. Then a massive white figure poured from the sinus tunnel of the alley. The body was a shapeless, sexless, naked mass of flesh, split open and bleeding in places. The thing seemed to ooze more than walk as it lurched towards George. The face's features were blotted out, as if wrapped in skin-like gauze or gauze-like skin, save for the glare of two icy blue eyes. The jaw was hanging off crookedly, rotting teeth bared, a breath like dead meat and stale beer wafting from the gaping maw. One hand extended into a long strap, only it was made of flesh instead of leather, darkened and stained with blood.

"You always were a-a fat piece of-of shit," George said weakly. He lifted the pipe, but was walking backwards. "Shoulda â€¦ laid off the beer, old â€¦ old man."

"Whuhse thehrre."

George's pipe looked small as his monster-father heaved its way towards him. He could not bring himself to get close enough to swing at the thing. Those eyes were boring a hole straight into his soul, glaring directly at the little weak boy that still lived inside him. That gaze seemed to draw that scrawny child out, until George's adult self could not be heard for the boy's internal screams of terror.

"Ohhh fuck me," George moaned.

He threw the pipe at the thing, turned, and ran. Behind him, he heard the blubbering thing squishing its way after him. Unable to bring himself to look back, George sprinted down the street, shoes pounding the grating hard, rattling it. He glimpsed things reaching up through the grates, jaws snapping at the soles of his shoes, arms and other unidentifiable limbs reaching. A paw gripped the hem of his jeans, and he stomped on it until it released him. He looked back, and his father's corpse or whatever it was nearly caught him with the elongated arm. He jumped, fell to his feet, and then scrambled forward.

"Shit, shit, shit," he panted as he ran. He kicked at a hand reaching up from the grate. "Shit! What do you want from me, huh? Leave me alone already! Just leave me the fuck alone!"

The Blue Creek Apartment building came into view. No one had ever protected him at home, but he had nowhere else to go. He ran up the steps in a rush, threw open the front door, and went in. He slammed the doors shut behind himself. He didn't think the fat fucker could get in through them, but he wasn't going to hang around and find out. As he ran up the stairs, he heard the front doors being slammed behind him. The force of the blows made the whole building shudder.

George burst into Apartment 208 and shut the door behind himself. He slid the chain on the top lock, and latched the secondary lock; you got a lot of weirdos in these apartments, and his father, the cop, had installed the locks himself. Or maybe, George reflected, Owen Sewell just liked the idea of his family being locked up tight. How

did that movie line go? He wasn't locked in there with them, they were locked in there with him?

"Bastard." George kicked the door. "You fucking bastard!"

He heard a heavy weight hitting the stairs, and his nerves failed him. He backed away from the door, and looked around the apartment. He ran down the hall, past his own room—that was where he took beatings, not escaped them. He went into the dark cavern that served as his parents' bedroom, and shut the door behind himself.

The gun!

George remembered that his father kept a spare gun in the top drawer of the tall chest of drawers by the door. He flung open the drawer and threw out its contents. At the bottom was a pistol, and he closed his hand over it.

The memories hit him full force then: waking up in the cell of the abandoned Toluca Prison, Murphy Pendleton becoming his own personal nightmare, being tortured to the sound of thunder and flashes of lightning, being tied to his bed again, forced to take a belting again, as if he had never grown up, never escaped childhood. He remembered taking up this pistol before — and placing its cold metal to the soft skin of his temple — then — the squeeze of the trigger, and darkness —

_I killed myself, _George thought, stunned. He staggered back from the drawers, the gun in his hand. _Holy Christ, I shot myself. And Pendleton was right, I didn't die, I just woke up back here. Unless I am dead, and hell looks a lot like Silent Hill._

George faced the mirrored closet doors. His reflection was a dark figure in the dim light, as if he had already ceased existing. He walked up to it, pressing a gloved hand to the glass. God, he looked so much like his father, save for the eyes. When had he gotten to this age? When had his thin lips gotten as severe as his mother's? When had his face sharpened into a replica of his old man's? Where had time gone, goddamn it?

Outside, he heard the thumps of his father approaching. He held the gun to his head. If he shot himself again, what then? Would he wake up in another part of Silent Hill? Would he finally just die, ending all this crap? What?

George lowered the gun, his arm dropping uselessly beside him. He couldn't do it, not again. It had taken everything he had left just to pull the trigger the last time. He had shot himself using the last tatters of pride he had left, to defy Murphy Pendleton, to escape the man that had taken his father's place. The bullet might or might not have killed him, but it had decimated his last shreds of dignity. He had been emptied of everything vital, and refilled with nightmares, pain, and fear. He had had faith in the emptiness of death, and even that had betrayed him. What he had now was nothing. He had nothing, no one. He was alone, alone and lacking even the strength to kill himself.

There was a soft shuffling sound, and a whisper of something being sprayed into the air. George turned slowly. His mother stood at her vanity, spraying White Claudia-based perfume around her. She set the

bottle down softly, and was still. He walked up to her.

"Ma? Hey, ma? Dad's coming home, ma. I think he's pissed again." He reached out, hesitated, and then grabbed her shoulder. "Hey, ma! Why don't you answer me? Ma! Look at me, please."

His mother turned and, for once, met his eyes directly. Her face softened, and her dark eyes, so like his, glistened moistly. She reached a thin hand up and touched his face. There were more thumps in the hall, but George hardly heard them. His mother had never reached out to him so affectionately before.

"Oh, my boy," Lotta Sewell said quietly. She embraced her son, briefly, and then looked him over. "You've gotten so tall."

George was frozen with shock. The loving in her words was so foreign to him that every syllable prickled his heart with pain. Mrs. Sewell smiled up at him, patting his face.

"Aren't you going to say anything, George?" she asked. "Haven't you missed me?"

George hadn't remembered how worn she had looked in the end. She had lasted hardly a year after her husband died in that alley. Her black hair had turned silver, and the lines were carved deeply into her cheeks, the corners of her eyes, and parentheses ringing her thin lips. Though still dark as obsidian, her eyes seemed faded somehow, their presence weakened. She was so thin, painfully thin.

"What was there to miss?" George asked. His hurt swelled inside, and he moved around her. "It's not like you were ever really there, anyway."

"I know."

"You know?" George asked. "What the hell is that supposed to mean? That you knew I needed you, that you knew I was alone, and you ignored me, anyway? What did you know, ma?"

"Everything," Mrs. Sewell said simply. She spread her arms, as if taking in the room, the apartment, and the entire town into their fold. "George, I knew everything."

"What does that mean?" George asked wearily. "Ma, can't you just tell me the deal straight for once?"

"Have you never wondered why the love between your father and I died, George?" Mrs. Sewell asked. "You never saw us truly happy with each other, not once, from the day you were born. Yet he never touched me. He never dared even raise his voice at me. Did you never see the fear in his eyes when he looked at me?"

"Now that you mention it, yeah," George said. He turned towards the sound of thumping at the front door. "Ma, we should go. Dad is not right. He's some kind of monster" literally, I mean."

"Your father won't hurt us now, George," Mrs. Sewell said gently. "Shh. Don't be afraid. Listen to me. You wanted answers, didn't you?"

"Yeah," George said, turning back to her. He took her delicate hands in his own. "Why was dad afraid of you, ma? You were distant, but you weren't mean to either of us directly."

"I was a very important person within the Order," Mrs. Sewell explained. "My family goes back a long way in Silent Hill, and we've always had certain talents. Mine manifested at a crucial time for the town, while the Order was planning to birth God. I was made into their oracle, and suddenly I was no longer a girl, no longer a woman, but a single mote drifting along the entire course of history. I saw everything, things even the Order did not believe at the timeâ€"to their detriment. I was a conduit for the will and the plan of God."

George was stunned by the revelation. He had always known religion was important to his mother, but he had never known she was important to the town's faith. Before returning to Silent Hill, he would have laughed at the preposterous notion of psychic ability, but now he did not even question it.

"The White Claudia," he said as the truth dawned on him. "Its oil can give you mild hallucinogenic effects. That's why you were always wearing it."

"Yes, and that was not all," Mrs. Sewell said. Her eyes took on a distant cast, and she frowned in distaste. "I used PTV."

George shook his head, whistling softly in surprise. PTV was a recreational drug made from White Claudia, and it had long been a part of Silent Hill's culture. Locals sold it to tourists before police and certain officials cracked down on it; afterward, the drug was spread more covertly, to keep the resort town's image clean. He had heard rumors the Order used it, but he had never bothered to find out whether this was true or not. His father was an alcoholic, and George had vowed early on never to let any substance make a fool out of him.

At Ryall State Prison, George had used one of his few old friends in Silent Hill to supply him with PTV. He had trafficked it to the inmate population for astronomical prices. It had really given him some fun times, watching the prisoners trip out and occasionally go insane from the drug. PTV was pretty heavy stuff.

"The rituals and the PTV showed me God's plan, and those that would go against it," Mrs. Sewell said. "I was treasured by the Order, even when I gave them dire warnings, even when they chose not to listen to me, or could not; I was always their prophet. Many were jealous of me, especially that Gillespie woman. I looked down on her so ruthlessly, her and her ill-fated plan to use her unwilling child as God's vessel. I was arrogant. Smug. But I paid a price for that power. I paid a very heavy price."

Mrs. Sewell was silent for a moment. There was a loud thumping outside the apartment, causing George to jump. He looked back at the hallway, but his father had not managed to gain access to their old home.

"The price I paid to be the Order's prophet was my happiness, all of it," Mrs. Sewell said. "I saw _everything_, George, do you understand

the implication of that? From the moment you were born, I knew every time you would hurt, every time you would hurt others, everything you would ever be, everything you would ever suffer. Do you know what it is to hold a baby, fresh and new, and never be able to hope for their future? I never knew the promise of a baby, I only knew what life had promised my son. It was agony. I tried to shut the knowledge out, to defy it, but I never could."

"You knew?" George asked. "You knew what dad would be like? You _knew_? And you just stood there, ignoring it? You just let it happen?"

"I told you that I tried to stop the train of events that led to your childhood, but God's plan is immutable," Mrs. Sewell said. "Do you remember when you fell down the stairs, and fractured your spine? We thought you would never walk again."

"God, yeah, that was hell," George murmured. He rubbed the small of his back unconsciously.

"That was a warning," Mrs. Sewell said. "I was planning to run away with you—away from Owen, away from this town, away from my duty to the Order. You kept saying in the hospital that a monster pushed you."

"Oh yeah, I'd forgotten that," George said. He did not want the answer, but he had to ask, "You're telling me that was _real_? That-that thing! Its head, twitching like that, all its skin like leather. God! You're saying that thing really was there? That it pushed me?"

"Yes," Mrs. Sewell replied gravely. "That 'thing' was Valtiel, an attendant of God. It protects God's plan. Like it or not, we are both bound to that plan. My efforts to deny it would have killed you if I had continued fighting, so I gave in. I bowed to the will of God, and let history go as it would. Loving you became a wound in my soul, so I—I suppose I shut that love away. I know that hurt you, but I couldn't bear to love you as much as I wanted to. As it was, the love for you that I kept bottled up inside eventually burst my heart."

George nodded, remembering for the first time that she was dead. He rubbed his face, feeling very tired. Moisture pricked at his eyes, but he fought the tears back. He had always wanted to know his mother loved him, cared for him, but she was right: love was painful. He was beginning to wish she had never cared about him at all, that would be easier than hearing this confession.

"I always knew that your father would hurt you, and that you would kill him," Mrs. Sewell said, to her son's amazement. "Yes, I knew that you ended his life. Of course I did. I was the only one in Silent Hill that knew, and I lied to the Order about it. I covered for you, George. I told them that I never saw who killed my husband. I was trusted. They believed me. But seeing the guilt in your eyes, the way you kept staring at your hands, it was too much."

"You were dead within a year," George said hoarsely. He cleared his throat. "God, ma, if I had known—"

"You don't understand yet, do you? _Knowing_ _means nothing," Mrs.

Sewell said. "I knew everything that would happen, but what could I do with that knowledge? Absolutely nothing. All I could do was stand apart from it, apart from life, isolated by my knowledge of it. All I could do, in the end, was watch. I watched the Order's plans fail time and time again, despite my warnings. I watched my husband become a monster. I watched my son suffer intolerable cruelty, only to become a cruel, twisted man himself."

"Hey, come on," George said with a nervous laugh. "I'm not that bad, am I?"

"It doesn't matter to me, either way," Mrs. Sewell said. She reached up and touched his face. "You're my son."

"But I'm not a monster," George said. "Am I, ma?"

"You've done monstrous things, George," Mrs. Sewell said. She spoke in the same tone she had used when explaining difficult things to him when he was a child. "Why do you think that you're being punished here?"

"Punished," George echoed. "So, was Pendleton right? Am I dead?"

"No," Mrs. Sewell said quickly. "No. To the world, you're dead, but the Order brought you here. They won't let you die, as a favor to me. It was the least that they owed me."

"I'm alive?" George realized that he had always believed Pendleton about their demises. It was almost an anticlimax to find out otherwise. He looked down at the gun in his hand. "Wait, but I shot myself. I shot myself in the head. There's no surviving that."

"They won't let you die," Mrs. Sewell said firmly. "Your friend Pendleton isn't dead, either."

"He's not my friend."

"Partner, then."

"He sure as hell ain't my partner!"

"The town gave you two to each other," Mrs. Sewell said. George went to protest, but she raised a hand. "No, that doesn't matter right now. Our time grows short."

"No, no, don't go yet, ma," George pleaded. "There are things I got to say to you. Look, about dad, I can explainâ€"

"You don't need to explain anything to me, George, you never did," Mrs. Sewell said. "I've seen everything there is to see of you and your life, and I love you. I love you and I forgive you. There is nothing that I ever saw that made me love you any less. I just needed you to know that."

"I know, ma, I know." George grasped her shoulders lightly. "But can't you just stay a while longer? Please? It's all I ever wanted, ma. I just wanted to know you loved me, that you saw me. Please stay with me."

"I can't. I must go back to your father now."

"To _that thing_?" George said shrilly. His mother whisked past him, and he grabbed at her. "You can't go to that monster! He'll kill you!"

He ran after his mother, down the hall, into the living room. She unlatched the chain lock.

"You can't go to him!" George said desperately. "Wait! Ma, wait! Don't open that door! Don't let him in!"

"I told you, darling," Mrs. Sewell said, "there is nothing to be afraid of anymore."

"No, don't do it! Don't!"

For a second, his mother's face twitched out of itself. There was no other way to explain it: motion blurred her face, and he saw the faceless jaws yawning open, the creature he had seen in the Historical Society so many days ago. He took a step back, alarmed. His mother turned back to the door, hiding her face, and unlatched the deadbolt. She opened it, and darkness flooded the room. George was pushed away by it, overwhelmed, and then everything ceased to be.

10. Chapter 10

10

George woke up shaken from the dream vision. He was lying on his back on a hospital bed, covered by only a stiff hospital gown and a thin white bed sheet. A narcotic numbness spread through his body, for which he was grateful. He heard rain splattering and dripping down a nearby window. He shut his eyes and dozed.

The memory of suicide jarred him awake again. He felt wrong, and the drugs were no longer clouding his mind as strongly. He sat up, and pain blazed behind his eyes and nose. A warm rush filled his brain, nearly knocked him out. He swore, clutching his head. His fingers touched bandages wrapped around his head, and a patch of hair shaved to stubble.

"Hey, you should lie down."

George squinted up. His vision cleared enough for him to recognize Murphy Pendleton standing over him. He reached towards him, and George flinched instinctively. Pendleton looked saddened by the reaction. He gripped George's shoulder, leaning down over him.

"I'm not dead," George said, his voice slurred with pain. He shrugged Pendleton's hand off. "Don't touch me. Damn it. Ma was right, they won't let me die."

"You're at Alchemilla," Pendleton said. He sat down on the edge of the bed. "After youâ€"you did it, I carried you out of the apartment building. The old man that had been tending the bar at the Heaven's Night happened to be outside. He said he had come to bring me the wallet I forgot there, but his being there â€" Well, it was

convenient, anyway. We drove you to the hospital. They said I brought you here just in time."

"Yeah right," George scoffed. He was trying to unwrap the bandages encircling his head. "Yeah fucking right."

"That was my thought exactly," Pendleton said. He was quiet a moment, his hands tightening on the sheet. "I rode with you in the back of the car. You weren't breathing, Sewell."

George shook uncontrollably, the feeling of wrongness intensifying. He ripped off the bandages furiously, tearing some of his hair off in the process. Pendleton tried to stop him, but he hit him away. His fingers searched, and then sank into a raw round hole. He was shaking violently now, and his head was throbbing with pain, but he finished taking the bandages off. On the other side of his head, he felt an identical bullet hole.

"Christ! Jesus fucking Christ!" George screamed. He stumbled out of bed, hitting the floor hard. He got to his feet with effort, and ran to the bathroom. His hair had been shaved off at the temples and below, and now there was a choppy regrowth. On both temples were matching bullet wounds, where the sinister bit of metal had entered and gone straight through his head. The sight made him so sick that he lifted the toilet seat and vomited into it.

Pendleton had followed. He crouched down next to him by the toilet, watching. There was some sympathy in his dark eyes, though George also noticed a detached curiosity there.

"What the fuck is this?" George asked weakly. He held his head, palms grazing the bullet holes. "How can they do this? I know ma meant well, but keeping me alive, forcing me to live in this place—" "What the fuck?"

Pendleton helped him to his feet, saying nothing. George was too distraught to refuse the help. He was walked back to bed, and this time he stayed there. Pendleton lifted his head with one hand, wrapping fresh bandages around it.

"Aren't you suddenly the happy helper, cupcake," George remarked. "Don't act like you're not enjoying this."

"I'm not."

"No? Not even a little bit?"

"No. I don't want to be a monster anymore, Sewell," Pendleton said. He finished taping the bandages and met the man's eyes. "Even if we are dead and doomed to suffer in this place forever, I don't want to live this way. I don't want to be like you."

"Breaking my heart, cupcake," George scoffed. "But we're not dead. I had a long conversation with someone while I was checked out. We're not dead. My ma—" "My mother, I mean, she was a big deal with the local cult. They're protecting me, if you can call forcing me to live in this place 'protection'. I guess they mean well. And for some crazy reason, they're keeping you alive, too."

"So, we aren't dead?" Pendleton asked. George shook his head, and

Pendleton frowned reflectively. "I guess it makes sense that you would be caught up in this stuff, if you're from this town. But why me?"

"I don't know," George said. Reluctantly, he admitted, "Ma said something about it. She said the town gave us to each other, whatever the fuck that's supposed to mean."

"Sounds romantic," Pendleton smirked, touching George's face. "Doesn't it? _Cupcake_?"

"Fuck off," George muttered. He lay back against the pillow, exhausted. There was a bitter taste of drug-laced bile in his mouth. "Why did you even bring me here? You should have just left me there. Maybe I would have died, after all."

"You know that wouldn't have happened," Pendleton said. "Anyway, I â€¦ I don't know. I didn't want to lose you. Even if you are a bastard, you're the only one I know in this town. I guess I didn't want to be alone here again."

"I'm never going to get rid of you, am I?" groaned George.

"Probably not."

George shut his eyes, exhaling. He didn't quite know how to feel about Pendleton's company.

"We've hurt each other unforgivably," Pendleton said, "but I don't think either of us has ever truly hated the other."

"Think again."

"You're the only person that understands me now," Pendleton went on, ignoring the comment. "After Charlie died, something was born inside me, and something else died. You were the first person that saw the monster inside me, you saw it even before I knew it was there. You understood me better than I understood myself. I tried to deny it, I tried to fight it, but the truth was always there, waiting to claim me. You understood the monster inside me, because it was just like the one living inside your twisted little mind."

"Flattery will get you nowhere, cupcake."

"You told me the opposite a few times at Ryall."

"Oh yeah." George chuckled at a few intimate memories. "Yeah, I did."

"Anyway," Pendleton said, his mouth twitching in annoyance, "we're alike, there's no denying that. I think the reason we hurt each other so much is because of that fact. It's ugly to see someone that reflects the worst part of yourself. It's painful. And it feels good to punish someone else for your own flaws. It feels good to pay that pain back."

"This is true, cupcake, very true." George opened his eyes and smiled darkly at the man. "Just you wait til I pay you back some. That's gonna feel pretty damn good."

"You say that like I'd let you," Pendleton said. "I told you before, I'm not going to be your prisoner again, not ever. But, I don't want to be your prisoner, either. This has gone too far. I never want to be the thing that I was on the night of the thunderstorm. I never want to do those things again."

George turned his face. The thought of that night was still enough to twist his insides. His face burned hotly with humiliation. Pendleton must have noticed, because he pressed a palm to the side of his face.

"I don't hate you," Pendleton said. "In fact, our similarities make it impossible not to like you, on some level. And you did give me Patrick Napier."

"Finally, some gratitude."

"No one else understood why I needed to kill Napier with my own hands," Pendleton said. "Even Coleridge didn't understand, I guess, if what you said about his opinion was true. I know Carol didn't understand. When I told her I was the one that killed him, she saw the monster then, and she looked at me like it had eclipsed my humanity. But you understood. You understood why I had to kill Napier."

"Yeah, I was glad," George said. "I really did admire you for that, you know, Pendleton."

"I know," Pendleton said. "I appreciate that more than I ever thought I would. I don't like having this monster inside me, but it's there, and it's good to know someone understands it."

"Doesn't mean I like it," George said. "And you're worse than me, Pendleton. Everyone I hurt deserved it, had it coming, even you. Especially you! But I never râ€"I neverâ€"actuallyâ€"

"Raped me?"

The word bristled George's pride. He looked away, nodded once.

"That's only because you weren't so inclined, and you know it," Pendleton said. "You still made me service you, like some cheap whore on my knees. You still handed me off to that thug in the shower. You watched, I heard you snickering in the shadows. Then you did nothing about that skinhead gang. Do you know what they did to me?"

George was unable to completely hide a flicker of amusement.

"Of course you know, you knew everything that happened in that prison," Pendleton said. "So don't act like I went beyond anything you did, because I didn't."

"Fair enough, cupcake."

"I can't believe you're still calling me that," Pendleton grumbled. "If we're going to be stuck in this town together for the foreseeable future, could you at least stop calling me that?"

"No. I can't. It just suits you so well, _cupcake_."

Pendleton shook his head. A nurse came in, and upon seeing George awake, she went to fetch a doctor. The doctor only gave the man a cursory exam, as if he expected nothing less than a full recovery. The nurse put his IV line back in, and injected some form of narcotic into it. Then, they left, having no problem leaving Pendleton there. Nothing had ever been run right at Alchemilla, George reflected.

"The town gave us to each other," Pendleton said after a moment. "Was that all your mother said?"

"Yeah," George said with a yawn. The drugs were making him fade fast.

"And we're not actually dead?"

"Nope."

"Then maybe it's not too late. Maybe we can both find something to live for, or at least redemption."

"Speak for yourself, Pendleton," George murmured, his eyes shutting. "I don't need forgiveness from you, God, or anyone or anything else. Ma forgave me. I didn't ask her to, but she did. That's enough. I don't have any regrets."

"You're a hard case, Sewell."

"Well thanks â€¦. cupcake."

Murphy glanced at Sewell, but the man had fallen asleep. He sighed, sitting in the chair next to the bed. He had not left Alchemilla Hospital since he had walked in with Sewell in his arms, his head bleeding on both sides. When they told him Sewell would live, he had been both relieved and disappointed. Now, he only felt grateful not to be alone.

After he had been pushed off the edge of town by Sewell, Murphy had been alone. He had found himself in a nightmare vision of Silent Hill, just like after the bus crash. Other monsters had come out to play then, vicious violent things that roused his own inner demon. He had fought and killed remorselessly, until he no longer remembered what he was without that wonderful violence. By the time he found Sewell in his apartment, he had become something other than human.

_But the monster went back to sleep after that, _Murphy recalled. _Maybe it's because of how alike we are. Maybe I just spent every last bit of evil intent the monster had on him. Maybe just seeing him this broken is enough. Whatever the reason, I can be human with this guy. Not the man I was before I lost Charlie, but still some sort of man. And as long as I'm punishing him for his dark side, I can pretend that I'm at least a little better than he is. That might just be enough to keep the Bogeyman in check. It might just be enough for now._

* * *

><p>It only took a few more days for George to recover enough to be

released from the hospital. Pendleton did not leave his room the entire time. George wondered if they both had come down with Stockholm Syndrome. Though irritated, he did not entirely mind Pendleton's presence; he had hated Alchemilla Hospital since the long hospitalization following his fall down the stairs. At least that doctor with the strange red pills (PTV, George knew now) was nowhere to be seen these days. What had been his name? Kaufmann, that was it. Good riddance.<p>

"He drugged you?" Pendleton asked when George mentioned Kaufmann in passing. They had been discussing George's past often lately. "You were just a kid."

"He must have worked for the Order," George said. He was dressing to leave the hospital. "He kept asking me what I saw when I went to sleep. Maybe he was trying to find out if I was connected to the psychic hotline like ma was."

"Were you?"

"You kidding me?" George sniffed in amusement. "If I was psychic, you think I ever would have screwed around with you so much? Knowing it would lead to all this crap?"

"I don't know, I think you might have," Pendleton said thoughtfully. "You're addicted to trouble, Sewell. Sometimes I think you just can't help yourself."

George ignored him, though he knew there was some truth in the words. He finished buttoning up his shirt, and turned to the window. For once, it had stopped raining, but the sky was still overcast.

"Well, want to get going?" Pendleton said. "You don't look very anxious to get back home."

"It's not my fucking home," George muttered. He turned to Pendleton, looking uncharacteristically sheepish, and his shoulders drooped. "But I guess I've got nowhere else to go. I take it the roads are still all fucked up?"

"Yeah. Phone lines are still down, too, and there's no cell reception. They said there was some damage due to the recent earthquakes."

"Great," George sighed. He looked at Pendleton. "And you? You planning on just moving in with me? Is that it?"

"I don't have anywhere else to go, either."

"Get a hotel or something," George said. "Do I look like the kind of guy that would run a halfway house to you, Pendleton?"

Pendleton put an arm around his shoulders as they walked out of the hospital room.

"Come on, Sewell, you know you'd be lost without me," he said. "Hell, I'd be lost without you. We've been through more together than I've been through with my wife."

"Touching, cupcake, real touching." George shrugged his arm off,

straightened his shirt. "You've become some kind of asshole, you know that, Pendleton?"

"Yeah, I know, _your _kind."

George said nothing, but there was a telltale quirk of his mouth that almost became a smile.

11. Chapter 11

****Epilogue****

"Where are we going, exactly?"

"You'll see."

"You're not going to try to push me off the edge of town again, are you?"

"Not in the mood today, cupcake."

For once, the sky was clear and blue over Silent Hill. Murphy had been surprised when Sewell dragged him out into the town that morning; the man had been reticent about leaving the apartment he claimed to hate so much. Since leaving the hospital, Sewell had predominantly spent his time in his boyhood room. Murphy had even glimpsed him trying to clean up the wreck he had made of it. The sight of Sewell picking up action figures and toy cars had been a bit absurd.

"Oh, I get it," Murphy said as they came to the shores of Toluca Lake. "You're going to try to drown me. Real original, Sewell."

"You've gotten paranoid, cupcake," Sewell said. "It makes you sound like a bitch."

Murphy gave him a look, and Sewell just smiled. Though he did not trust him, it was true Sewell didn't seem to be particularly angry today. In fact, he seemed to be in a good mood. Murphy decided to humor him as they went to the boat launch on the docks nearby. They got into a small boat, and Sewell piloted them across the lake.

"I've been thinking, cupcake," Sewell said, gazing across the rippling blue waters. "I was wondering why we were brought back here. It couldn't have been just so we can eternally torture each other, or sit on our asses talking, like we've been doing. Everyone in this town has some kind of role to play."

Murphy remembered DJ Ricks, condemned to play the same music over and over again until he was snuffed out. He also thought of Blackwood, delivering mail all throughout this strange town for God knew how long. The idea that he and Sewell were here to fulfill a similar role was not comforting. He said as much to Sewell, but it did not dampen the man's spirits.

"Those chumps just didn't have any passion for their careers," Sewell said. "Not like me. I _loved _my job."

"Yeah, I know," Murphy said. He was beginning to get a bad feeling. "You had a real passion for being a bullying son-of-a-bitch."

"I kept those scumbags in line, that's all," Sewell said. "And I was good at it, Pendleton, you know I was. And what about you? You were good at giving them what they deserved, too. Ha, Napier found that out, right?"

"I'm not proud of that."

"But you should be," Sewell said. "Those skills will serve you well. You'll see."

The moment the island and its sole facility came into view, Murphy knew where they were going.

"Christ, are you insane?" he asked angrily. He reached over and grabbed Sewell by the front of his shirt. "You think I'm going back to prison? To Overlook? Turn the boat around, Sewell!"

"Been here before, huh?" Sewell said. "Look, whatever you saw here before, it isn't like that now. I came out here just the other day. It's a prison like any other."

"That's even worse," Murphy said. "I'm still a fugitive, remember? I'm not going to waltz in there, with you of all people, and let them lock me back up!"

"Relax. No one is going to lock you up, cupcake," Sewell said calmly. He methodically pried Murphy's hands off his shirt. "You've been all around town and no one has recognized your stupid mug yet, right? You're protected by the Order, same as I am. God knows why. Believe me, if I could get you arrested, I would. I tried."

"You _tried_?"

"Of course I did," Sewell said. "Told everyone in town who you were. Finally, that old bartender from the Heaven's Night told me to give it up: no one was going to arrest you. He said your slate has been wiped clean"at least inside Silent Hill."

"You expect me to believe that?"

"Yeah," Sewell said simply. He started the boat's motor again and steered on towards Overlook Penitentiary. "You think that if I could have you arrested, I wouldn't? There's nothing I'd like more than to see my little cupcake back behind bars. But it ain't happening. So, this is the next best thing."

"And what exactly is 'this'?"

"They need guards, Pendleton," Sewell said, dark eyes shining. "Ha, ha! It's going to be just like coming home."

Murphy stared at him, dumbfounded by the man's exuberance. _He looks like a kid on Christmas morning, _he marveled. _What the hell is wrong with this guy?_

"You're sick," Murphy told him. "You are aware that this goes beyond

dedication, right? That it's more like a fetish at this point?"

"We all need our fantasies, cupcake," grinned Sewell. "Don't tell me you never dreamed of being on the other side at Ryall, Pendleton. I saw you looking at my uniform. You wondered how I must have felt, having all that power, didn't you? Well, now you get the chance to find out. It's your lucky day, cupcake."

Murphy sighed, looking at the island ahead. _Fine, when he finds it in chaos, when he sees those monsters I fought there, then he'll give it up, _he thought. _He must be lying about having come here before. When I was here, it was a nightmare. No way they cleaned all that up in a couple of weeks._

Yet the island was still when they docked at the small launch. A few crows cawed and fought over something down the beach. Overlook Penitentiary consisted of several massive concrete buildings behind a stately wall topped with nasty-looking barbed wire. Murphy's stomach twisted at the idea of being inside a prison with Sewell. _If he tries anything, I'm going to kill him, _he thought. _I don't care if he dies for good or not, I'll kill him._

"You look queasy, cupcake," Sewell smirked. "Boat ride upset your stomach? Or is it something else?"

Murphy glared at him. Sewell laughed. He knew what it was, and he was enjoying Murphy's anxiety. Just before they reached the front gates, Murphy grabbed the man by the hair and arm, and slammed him into the wall.

"Hey, hey, hey!"

"You try _anything_, and you're going to suffer," Murphy hissed in the man's ear. "Understand me?"

"I get it!"

Murphy released him. Sewell rubbed his shoulder, giving him a sullen frown. There was still a great deal of danger in those eyes, Murphy thought, but Sewell had been tame since his attempted suicide. Murphy wondered what the fallout would be when the man finally recovered some of his pride; not pretty, he suspected. _I'll have to keep an eye on him_.

Still eyeing Murphy warily, Sewell went over to the guard booth by the gates. He pounded on the glass, stirring the guard from his nap.

"Hey, Donnell, it's me," Sewell said. "Said I'd be back, didn't I? Open up."

"Hi," the sandy-haired man greeted him, rubbing sleep from his face. "Don't know why you'd come back here, George, it's a real shithole."

"Nowhere else to go, I guess."

"I hear that," the man said. "Hey, it was great catching up the other day. Drinks at the Heaven's Night later?"

"Hell, if I can get a job here, the rounds will be on me."

Murphy listened to the casual exchange, remembering many others of its kind at Ryall. Some of the guards had hated Sewell with a passion, but he got along quite well with the others. Though certainly not the biggest man on the guard force physically, Sewell's hard edge and cruel streak had earned him respect. Murphy mentally lamented the sad state of humanity as Donnell buzzed them in through a small side door in the prison wall.

"Hey, Donnell?" Sewell spoke up before they went through the door. He pointed at Murphy. "This here's Murphy Pendleton."

Murphy's heart skipped a beat. His entire body tensed for action. Donnell just looked at him blankly.

"Oh, ok. And?"

"Just a friend," Sewell said, patting Murphy's shoulder. "I thought you two should be introduced. He's applying for a job here, too."

"Oh," Donnell said. "Yeah, nice to meet you, then, Murphy."

"You, too," Murphy said thickly.

They went in through the door, and it slammed automatically shut behind them. Sewell's barely-contained laughter burst out, echoing down the long, pale corridor.

"Oh ho, man! Your face was priceless, cupcake!" he chortled. "You didn't shit yourself, did you? I don't think that would make the interview go in the right direction."

Murphy felt sick. Unable to say anything, he reached back, and slapped the man upside the head. Sewell complained, but it did little to stifle his mirth. He looked right at home within the prison walls, and Murphy had no choice but to fall in beside him.

"I think you'll like being on the other side of things," Sewell said as they walked. "Never have been before, have you? Yeah, I read your records, all the way back to your juvenile delinquency arrests."

"Those are supposed to be sealed," Murphy said. "Hell, I don't know why I'm even surprised. Let me guess, you called in a 'favor' to get your hands on the records?"

"Sure did," Sewell said. "No parents, no home. You've been a prisoner ever since you were born and sent to that orphanage, huh?"

"The nuns were very nice," Murphy said. "It wasn't like prison, not at all."

"Whatever you say," Sewell said nonchalantly. "Locked up at the orphanage, and the few times you went to juvenile detention. You know, you went about getting Napier ass-backwards. You should have just tried to get on guard detail, with me. But what did you do? You went and got yourself arrested!"

"It never crossed my mind," Murphy admitted. "I guess I just never saw myself as the enforcement type. Besides, I couldn't chance someone finding out about my juvenile record and denying me the job. I needed to get that bastard."

"See, I was never that stupid," Sewell boasted. "I screwed around, sure, but I never got myself arrested, not even as a kid."

"Yeah? Sure your daddy didn't just cover for you?"

"My old man wouldn't have covered shit for me," Sewell sneered. "In fact, he was always threatening to be the one that finally locked me up."

"But he never did."

"Never got a chance," Sewell said spitefully. "But we weren't talking about me, cupcake."

"No, you were talking about me," Murphy said. He grabbed Sewell by the arm. "What is it with you? Why have you always been so interested in me? Was it really just because I went to Ryall to avenge Charlie?"

Sewell jerked his arm away and walked a little faster ahead. Murphy had seen by now that the man was uncomfortable discussing his feelings—“if he had any human feelings in that black heart of his, that was.

"You can talk," Sewell finally said. "As much as you claim to hate me, you're still following me around like a lost puppy."

"Nowhere else to go."

"Silent Hill isn't the smallest town in the world," Sewell pointed out. "You could find another district. Hell, you could find friends, maybe a woman. Have you even been with anyone since escaping? Other than yours truly, of course."

Though he spoke of it lightly, Murphy glimpsed a twitch of pain on the man's face. He almost sounded hurt. Murphy hated being reminded of that night, no matter how he tried to justify it to himself. It made him feel dirty, like a wretched beast more than a man. He wondered how Sewell, guilty of so many similar crimes, lived with himself.

"No."

"_No_?" Sewell echoed, eyebrows raised. He looked up at Murphy incredulously, but then his cynical mask covered his face. "So, you spent all that time just missing me, huh? That's touching, cupcake."

Though he spoke sarcastically, Sewell seemed genuinely pleased by the information. Murphy recalled a passing comment one of the other guards at Ryall had made, about his not knowing what Sewell's 'obsession' with Murphy was about. Towards the end, Murphy had noticed quite a few of the guards losing their admiration for Sewell. Had it been because Sewell had been fixated with him, to the point where even his coworkers noticed?

"I think I get it now," Murphy said.

Sewell paused, a hand on the door at the end of the hall. He looked at Murphy with his usual blend of amusement and curiosity. Murphy pulled him closer by the arm, and bent down to bring their lips together. Sewell gave a murmur of surprise. He pulled back for just a moment, before kissing the man back with a furious passion. He bit Murphy's bottom lip hard enough to shed blood when they pulled apart.

"Hell was that?" he asked, sounding shaken. He licked blood from his teeth, grinned uncertainly.

"Just testing a theory," Murphy said, pulling the door open, "cupcake."

Sewell followed him into the prison proper. There were guards around, so whatever he was going to say died on his lips. He followed Murphy, staring at the floor, his face flushed crimson. He was pensive, but not, Murphy thought, displeased.

* * *

><p>Several days later, Murphy and George were back on the little boat, motoring out to Overlook Penitentiary. Murphy unbuttoned the top button of his blue guard's uniform shirt, shifted on the boat's small bench. George steered the boat confidently ahead.<p>

"I still can't get used to this," Murphy said. He tugged the stiff shirt, adjusted his belt. "I feel like an asshole."

"That's the way of the world, cupcake," George said. "You either spend your life locked up by assholes, or you become the asshole doing the locking up."

"There are other places to work, you know," Murphy told him. "The Heaven's Night. I heard they're reopening the Historical Society. Hell, Alchemilla Hospital is hiring."

"Trust me, you don't want to work at Alchemilla," George said. "And you heard the interviewer, didn't you? We have a 'special skill set'. He said we'd be perfect."

"If that guy knows anything about you, then he's got a weird definition of 'perfect'."

There was a small radio in the boat, spitting music out between spurts of interference. "Born Free" began to play. George listened a moment, shook his head, and shut it off.

"I thought you liked that song," Murphy said.

"It's a lie, Pendleton," George said. "No one is born free. We're spewed out into this world, chained by the cord, between the bars of our mothers' legs. We're imprisoned by whoever our parents happen to be. We're imprisoned by whatever type of person we're inclined to be. Freedom is a lie. All we can do in life is find the right kind of prison to be trapped in."

"You take that a bit too far, don't you?" Murphy said. "I mean, a literal prison?"

George was quiet for a while, his eyes showing some internal debate.

"You know why I became a prison guard, Pendleton?" he finally asked. Without waiting for an answer, he admitted, "I was going to be a cop, like my father, but I didn't pass the psychiatric exam."

Murphy snorted. George's grip tightened on the boat's motor handle.

"I swear to God, if you laugh, I'm going to push you into the lake!"

"That explains a lot, Sewell," Murphy said. "It really says it all, doesn't it?"

"Fuck you, Pendleton," was all the mortified man said in reply. "I don't know why I tell you anything."

"Sure you do. You know why."

Murphy reached across the boat and touched George's face. George turned away, his ears turning red. Since kissing him, Murphy had discovered that the way to shut the man up was by showing him any form of affection. This time was no different; George didn't say another word until they were in the prison. _All you need is love, _Murphy thought dryly.

George could tell Murphy was enjoying his chagrin. He wondered if the man was merely trying to bother him, or whether he was genuinely beginning to feel affection for him. He had always believed their connection went both ways, and now that they were stuck together, he suspected whatever passed for fondness between them was mutual. Pendleton had been fluctuating between violence and those oddly paternal touches more often recently, after all.

_'I never got being a father out of my system, I guess,' _Pendleton had confessed to George the other night. _'I suppose this town has just twisted those instincts like it twists everything else.'_

At least Pendleton was a self-aware freak, George figured, unlike his state of chronic denial back at Ryall State. He had come to terms with the monster inside, and with the fate it had led him to in Silent Hill. Most importantly, he had accepted George's dark side, he understood it now. George had always known they were two of a kind, and now even Pendleton could not deny the fact any longer. It took a monster to love a monster.

_Not that I love the stupid son-of-a-bitch, _George told himself. _That would be a step too far. But we can have some real fun now. Which reminds me â€| _

"This way today, cupcake."

George turned a corner after they punched in for their shifts. Murphy followed him down the rows of cells. He glanced into a few of them, remembering what it was like to be confined, the desperation and

misery that seeped into the very essence of those tiny rooms. He hated to admit it, but George had a point: it was much better to be on the other side of those bars. Occasionally, he met the eyes of a con, and wondered what the poor bastard had done to be imprisoned in Silent Hill. Then he remembered what Napier had done to get himself incarcerated, and thought, screw them, they probably deserved it.

They walked down a ramp leading to one of the prison's sub-levels. The bustle of the upper floors died down. Pipes lined the ceiling, and there was a musty smell of mold. Despite his denouncement of the song, George was whistling "Born Free" again. Murphy figured he simply liked the irony.

"Where are we going?" Murphy asked. When he was ignored, he reached out and pulled George back by the arm. "Hey. Where are you leading me? You got some trap set up or what?"

"You really have to watch that paranoia, cupcake," George said. "We're friends now, aren't we?"

"No. I don't know what we are, but we're not 'friends'." Murphy shook him. "Just tell me where we're going, Sewell."

"Fine." George shoved Murphy back, straightening his shirt. "I wasn't going to ruin the surprise, but if you insist. I got a guy down in the old shower rooms. No one goes there anymore. The Order told me they need a certain confession from him, so we're going to get it."

"You want me to just beat up some guy with you?" Murphy asked. "Are you nuts?"

"That cuckoo flew over the nest a long time ago, cupcake," George said. "Look, the Order is important to this town. They got real power. It would be good for them to owe us a favor."

"I'm not going to hurt someone just to get a favor."

"No?" George asked, looking him up and down. "Okay."

"Okay?"

"Yeah."

"Just like that?"

"You're not a prisoner anymore, right?" George said, though there was a sly smile on his lips. "You can do what you want."

George began to walk down the basement hall, arms behind his head casually. He walked backwards, his eyes still boring into Murphy's.

"You know, I don't blame you," he said. "You want to do the right thing. You still think there is such a thing as the 'right thing' in this world. It's cute, cupcake, real cute. Know what else is cute? Kids. Little girls like the ones this guy in the old shower room just loved to rape."

Murphy had been turning away, but now he stopped. He glared at George, but his anger was not entirely directed at him. He thought of Napier. He thought of Charlie. The hallway seemed very still, as if time itself had frozen. The old fluorescent lights flickered.

"Yeah, diddling little girls was the guy's hobby." George stopped walking. "When he wasn't strangling them to death and then posing them up around his house like plastic dolls. Taxidermy for adults. The Order says he had about eight when they caught him. Some were sitting at a tea party table just like the ones they'd never see again at home."

"Sewell, damn it! Stop!" Murphy yelled at him. "How do you even know any of that is true?"

"The Order doesn't have to lie about the evil in this world," George pointed out. "You know there's no point in lying about evil, when there's so much right there on the surface for everyone to see."

Murphy said nothing. He realized that his hands had curled into fists. He kept seeing Napier's face: laughing about the atrocities he committed, that soft pudgy face that had been the last nightmare Charlie had ever seen. George dropped his arms and walked up to him.

"So you can go if you want to, cupcake," he said. "You can just walk away. But you didn't walk away when it was your boy. Did you?"

Murphy shook his head. George put his arms around his neck, startling him.

"You didn't walk away from me, either," George went on. "You paid me back for hurting you, didn't you? You're a big believer in payback, same as me."

"Are you saying you're just okay with that?" Murphy asked. "After what I did to you?"

"I'm not gonna say it was pleasant, being on the receiving end," George said. "But hell, I had my fun with you, you had your fun with me. We're even now. We're more than even, we're the same. It's like I've been telling you all along: we're the same kind of guy, Murphy."

Murphy wanted to deny it, but he no longer could. He had done too much, had come too far, to exonerate himself from the kind of cruelty that lived in George Sewell. He thought of the way Carol had looked at him that last time, the abuses he had heaped upon this man during the thunderstorm, the absolute pleasure he felt in killing the monsters that lurked in the bowels of Silent Hill. No, he was no different from Sewell, after all. He had been running from that truth from the moment he met the real George Sewell at Ryall, and now acceptance had brought him full circle.

"So you can go." George took Murphy's face in both gloved hands. "You can go and keep trying to run away from me. Keep trying to run away from the Napiers of the world and what you want to do to them. Or you

can come with me, and help me give this sick bastard what he deserves."

George released him and went walking backwards down the tunnel again.

"It's your call, cupcake," he said. "But sooner or later, you'll come around. What do you think we're in this town for, anyway?"

George shrugged and turned his back on him. Murphy watched him walk down the tunnel, getting smaller as he went, whistling his tune again. Murphy stood in the middle of the passageway, looking from one end to the other. He hesitated, turned, and finally went jogging after Sewell.

"You made the right choice, cupcake," George said when Murphy caught up to him.

"I made the only choice, Sewell," Murphy corrected him. "I made the only choice I could."

** - End - **

_I'm friends with the monster that's under my bed
>Get along with the voices inside of my head
You're trying to save me, stop holding your breath
>And you think I'm crazy, yeah, you think I'm crazy

_Well, that's nothing
>Well, that's nothing

"_The Monster" - Eminem feat. Rihanna_

End
file.